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DRAMAS,

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DRAMAS,
TRANSLATIONS
OF
THE
OCCASIONAL POEMS

MARY ANNE BENTLEY

DRAMAS,

&c.

LONDON

JOHN BENTLEY

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DRAMAS
TRANSLATIONS
AND
OCCASIONAL POEMS.

BY
BARBARINA LADY DACRE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

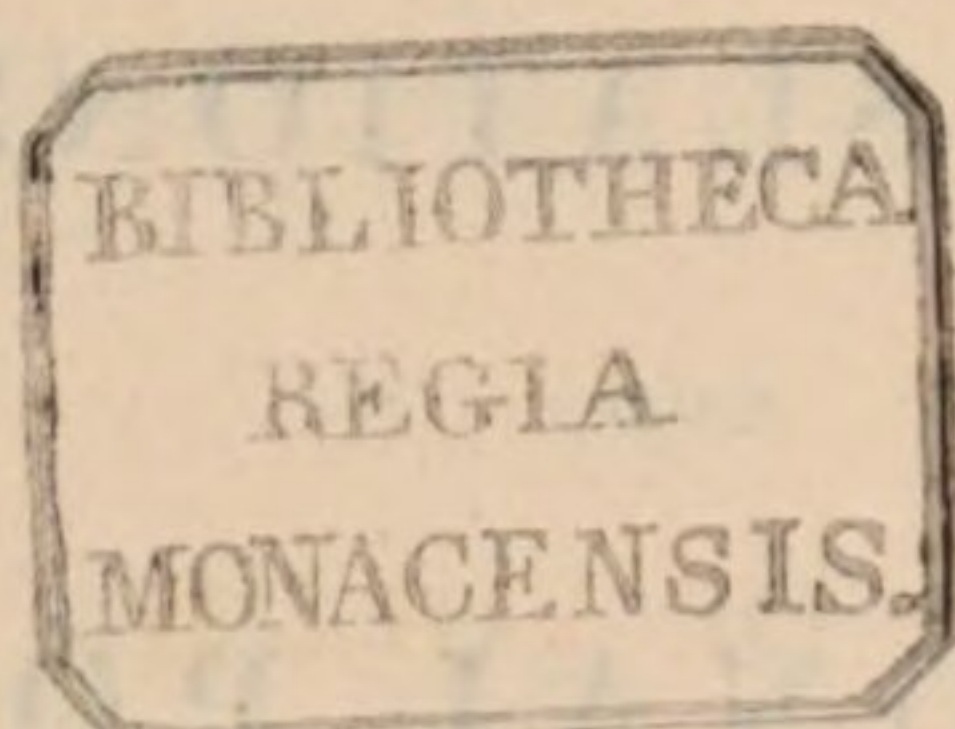
VOLUME II.

“ Per desio di Lode
Non canto io, no ; ben per chi m'ama e m'ode.”
VITTORIA COLONNA.

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY

MDCCCXXI.

NOT PUBLISHED.



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INA.

A TRAGEDY.

IN A

THE

THIS tragedy was first printed in 1815, as it had then been prepared for the stage. I now restore the original catastrophe, and some other parts which had been cut out. I have also compressed many passages, and hope to have succeeded in rendering the piece more deserving of the protection it received from individuals, when rejected by the public.

As I retain the title of *tragedy*, I, for the same (I think obvious) reasons, retain the name of "Ina," although I am aware it was once borne by a good old *king*, of whom we know little else. The sound appears to me feminine, and I have a fanciful preference for it, as bearing some affinity with Inez de Castro, whose melancholy story suggested the fable of my play.

THE

This tragedy was first written in 1613, as is said to have
been presented to the court. I have since compared many passages
of the original with the present text, and have found many
differences. I have also compared many passages
and have to be sure ascertained the true sense of the
more important of the passages, and I have found them
in the original, which is now in the hands of the
As I write the title of this play, I find the same
(I think it best) under a certain title, and I have
although I am sure it was once known by a great title
and, as I have said, I have found the same in the
to be the same, and I have a great deal of evidence for
it, as I have said, and I have a great deal of evidence
where the original is, and I have a great deal of evidence
that

PROLOGUE,
BY THE
HONOURABLE WILLIAM LAMB.

THE tragic Muse, in this our later age,
Has seldom shed her influence on the stage.
With jealous eye, with cold disdainful mien
She turns away, and seems to claim the scene
For those, to whom her loftiest lays belong—
The mighty masters of her earlier song.
For her high thoughts, for her impassion'd strain,
For her proud crown, so often sought in vain,
To-night you hear a timid votress dare
Address an humble, yet ambitious prayer.
Say, should her powers beneath her task decline,
And sink, unequal to the great design,
Yet can you from her aim your praise withhold;
Bold is that aim, but noble as 'tis bold.
As erst in Athens, mighty mother state
Of all that's lovely, as of all that's great,
The gifted bards, whose grave and simple song
Held high dominion o'er the list'ning throng,
Drew from their country's first heroic day
The wondrous subjects of their moral lay:

So, in that time, when nations, driv'n to roam,
Had sought in this fair Isle another home,
And barbarous chiefs, where each had led his band,
Now sway'd divided empires in the land ;
In that rude time, which gathering ages veil,
We fix the scene of our fictitious tale ;
Which seeks by natural passions to impart
A human interest to the human heart ;
A tale of secret love in generous youth,
Uncompromising honour, dauntless truth ;
Faith, which sore-tried nor change nor doubt can know,
And public danger mix'd with private woe.—
For, e'en amidst those dark and murderous times,
Religion's errors and ambition's crimes,
Athwart the gloom of that tempestuous day
The native spirit shot a splendid ray ;
The spirit of the land—whose course appears
Mark'd by its glory down the path of years,
Unalter'd still through every varying state,
The lapse of ages and the turns of fate—
And late, when o'er us gleam'd the troubled air,
With signs of woe and portents of despair,
The soul of Britain, tranquil and the same,
Shone forth to all mankind a guiding flame :
And if those times of toil must come once more,
If blasts again must rise, and thunders roar—
The beacon, brighter 'midst the gathering night,
Lifts high to heav'n its unextinguish'd light,
And, from the sacred Isles commanding steep
Streams life and safety o'er the labouring deep !

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

CENULPH, *king of Wessex.*

EGBERT, *his son.*

ALWYN, *Egbert's friend.*

OSWALD, MORDRED, *and other lords.*

BALDRED, *a crafty monk of the royal blood.*

OSRIC, *captain of the guard.*

EDELFLADA, *princess of Mercia, betrothed to Egbert.*

INA, *secretly married to Egbert.*

BERTHA, *an old lady, confidant to Edelfleda.*

ELENOR, *and other ladies, attendants on Edelfleda.*

ALICE,
BLANCH, } *attendants on Ina.*

Messengers, Soldiers, Peasants, &c.

SCENE, *the kingdom of Wessex.*

I N A.

ACT I.—SCENE I.

EDELFLÉDA'S *Antichamber*.

BERTHA, ELENOR, &c.

BERTHA (*entering from the inner apartment*).

THE princess will not yet come forth. She thus
Will oft retire from gaiety and splendor
To sit and muse.

ELENOR.

She is much changed of late.
There was a time when she was always pleased.
She chid me yesterday, I know not wherefore.
The broider'd robe, I wrought with so much care,
She cast aside, and said it suited not
Her homely features.

BERTHA.

Homely features, said she?
The beauteous princess Edelfléda!

ELENOR.

Yes.

She is but changed in mind, although she blame
Her outward form: she is no longer gentle.
Dost thou remember something of this humour,
When the orphan Lady Ina's charms erewhile
Arrested every eye and every heart
Of the gay court?

BERTHA.

Fie on thee, Elenor;
Thou would'st not tax thy mistress with base envy?

ELENOR (*archly*).

Not so—but when the Lady Ina was forbid
The royal presence, our fair Edelfleda
Shone forth more radiant; as the glorious sun
Himself is wont, when the o'ershadowing cloud
Is wafted by the angry winds away.

BERTHA.

The king of Mercia's daughter, so adorn'd
With every gift of royal excellence,
Were rather deem'd the sun that shed a radiance
O'er the slight vapour sporting in his beams.

ELENOR.

Nay, you are angry now; but 'tis well known
How much Prince Egbert loved the Lady Ina.

BERTHA.

Silence, imprudent girl! At such an hour,

When for the royal nuptials we prepare,
If she should hear thee speak the hated name—

ELENOR.

I will be silent. But even thou hast own'd
The princess loved not her—I may not *name*.

Enter EDELFLADA (they appear embarrassed).

EDELFLADA.

Why start thus, Elenor, and blush to see me?
Wherefore dost thou look strange upon me, Bertha?
It seems my presence is to neither grateful.
Accurst the day I came to Wessex' court!
E'en my own women, Bertha, even thou
Wilt soon forsake me.

BERTHA.

How have I deserved
This keen reproach?

EDELFLADA.

Go, leave us, Elenor!

[*Exit* ELENOR.]

Forgive my wayward temper, dearest Bertha;
And may'st thou never know the pang that forced
The peevish word which seem'd to chide thy love.

BERTHA.

Alas! my princess, double is the wrong
To own a pang, nor share it with thy Bertha.

EDELFLÉDA (*embarrassed*).

What have I said? Oh! there are pangs that shun
All fellowship. Grief utters its complaint,
And finds a sweetness in its gushing tears;
But this!——

BERTHA.

Remorse alone speaks thus.

EDELFLÉDA.

Remorse

Were *his*, more justly, who inflicts the ill.
Wrongs undeserved, and borne in silence, wake
No conscious blush. The weak complaint alone
(By pride disown'd) might crimson o'er my cheek.

BERTHA.

If breathed to *me*? To *me*, whose raptured ear
Drank the first half-form'd accents of thy tongue.

EDELFLÉDA.

This hated court is Edelfleda's prison,
Not the gay scene of her famed beauty's triumph.
But Mercia's king, the valiant Ethelbald,
Will free his daughter, and avenge her wrongs!
Restore her to her country—to her honours—
To all restore her, save to happiness!
Neglected! scorn'd!

BERTHA.

By whom neglected, scorn'd?

EDELFLÉDA (*embarrassed*).

The king!—his nobles!

BERTHA.

The king loves—honours thee;
Already, princess, holds thee as his daughter,
Whom a few days will make Prince Egbert's wife.

EDELFLÉDA.

Prince Egbert's wife! Oh! never, never, Bertha.
Why hast thou touch'd that string?

BERTHA.

I thought no ill.

Came you not to this court betroth'd to him?
And gaily came, a joyful, willing bride.
Is not Prince Egbert knighthood's fairest flower?

EDELFLÉDA.

Too sure, I came; gay, thoughtless, young, and free;
And, oh! too surely he is all thou say'st:
Nay, far beyond *thy* fancy's reach endow'd!

BERTHA.

Thy speech is still at variance with itself.

EDELFLÉDA.

'Tis but the picture of the strife within.

BERTHA.

My child! these dreadful words of mystery
Fill all my soul with terror. I adjure thee,
By my long services, my faithful duty,
Speak thy full heart.

EDELFLÉDA (*after a conflict*).

He loves me not, good Bertha.
Spare, spare a princess' pride, and guess the rest.

BERTHA.

Heaven shield thee! would'st thou say he loves another?
Nay, think it not: she has been long removed.

EDELFLÉDA.

I named her not. Ha! then thou *know'st* it, Bertha!
Or hadst not glanced at *her*. Thou know'st it; speak,
Oh! tell me all; it is too late to hide it.

BERTHA.

Indeed I nothing *know*—believe me, nothing:
The idle rumours of an idle court—
Should they arrest our thoughts?

EDELFLÉDA.

What idle rumours?
And am I then the jest o' the idle court?
Do they point at me as I pass, and say
'Tis *she*! 'tis the neglected Edelfléda!

BERTHA.

Be calm, my princess; see the holy Baldred:
You did yourself request his presence.

Enter BALDRED.

EDELFLÉDA (*resuming a dignified manner*).

Father,

You are welcome. I would claim a service ;
For sudden purposing to leave a court
Where I have long resided, while the duty
A daughter owes a father—

BALDRED.

Can it be
That Edelfleda leaves the court of Wessex,
When all the palace, all the city, hail
With gratulation her approaching nuptials ?

EDELFLADA (*haughtily*).

Softly, good Baldred. Learn that Mercia's princess
Is not so lightly won, nor gives her hand
As to the careless boor the village maid,
Willing ere woo'd, or rudely woo'd at best.

BALDRED (*sarcastically*).

Ill would the faltering phrase, the humble sigh,
Become the lip accustom'd to command !
Would'st thou Prince Egbert, *he* so graced by fortune,
Should bear himself as common lovers use ?

EDELFLADA.

I heed not how the prince may bear himself.
Go, Baldred ; plead his cause in other ears,
Where it may more import. What may concern
My honour, is my sole, my proper care.
I claim no service of your courtesy,
Save to make known, e'en now, to royal Cenulph,

My purpose to return to Mercia's court.

[*Exeunt* EDELFLEDA and BERTHA.

BALDRED (*alone*).

And is it so? And will she sacrifice
To pride, her passion for detested Egbert?
This may work mischief to the man I hate.
All kindly feelings from my breast I banish'd,
When, in disgust and bitterness of soul,
O'er my deep festering wounds I flung this garb.
It was for Egbert fortune slighted me!
Ere he had grasp'd a sword, I led the battle!
When lo! he comes a meteor in men's eyes—
Draws in his glittering train my soldiers' hearts—
I woo'd fair Ina, and was paid with scorn:
While Egbert—curses on him! fired alike—
Though now to hate be turn'd the love I bore her,
My bosom holds remembrance of the offence.

Enter an ATTENDANT.

ATTENDANT.

The king demands your presence, holy father,
On matters of high import.

BALDRED.

I attend. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

CENULPH *and* LORDS.

CENULPH.

The times indeed do wear a fearful aspect.
You, noble Oswald, Mordred, Alwyn, Orgar,
Have shared my counsels with the holy Baldred ;
We have most sure advices from our outposts
That Ethelbald has arm'd, but yet declares not
His hostile purpose ; still in martial shows
Breathing his powers : as 'twere the boar enchain'd,
That whets his hideous tusks, and wounds the soil,
Rooting up herb and flower.

OSWALD.

My gracious liege,
And can you doubt the purpose of proud Mercia ?
Have not of late more frequent messengers
Sped with unwonted diligence 'twixt him
And his fair daughter ? nay, who has not mark'd
The princess' alter'd mien—the quick succession
Of fierce conflicting passions on her brow ?
The day is not yet fix'd that gives her hand

To Cenulph's royal heir. The people murmur,
That thus the pledge of peace with Ethelbald
Should still on vain pretences be deferr'd.

CENULPH.

Oswald, thou pointest to my sorrow's source.
My friends, ye know Prince Egbert's ardent temper,
In childhood haply foster'd by indulgence.

ALWYN.

We do, my liege ; but his impatient spirit
Is coupled with such warm, heart-winning frankness,
Such all-embracing kindness, it but seems
The larger bounty of more lib'ral nature.

MORDRED.

A father or a friend may see it thus,
But it is dangerous.—To this we owe,
(This spirit so impatient of control,)
That we are threaten'd by dread Ethelbald.

CENULPA.

We sheathed the sword, my friends, and Edelfleda
Came to our court—the pledge of mutual love
Betwixt two nations harass'd by long war.
Betroth'd to Egbert, all a mother's care,
From my good Editha, the princess shared.
The general sorrow, while my poor queen languish'd,
And her lamented death, forbade the nuptials.
Meantime—(Ah! woe to me that e'er I foster'd

That serpent in my easy bosom) Ina,
The orphan daughter of brave Sigiswold——

OSWALD.

My liege, removed you not the lovely mischief?
Forbidding her the court and festive pageants?

CENULPH.

I did; and thought to quench love's idle flame,
By sending Egbert to command the force
Raised to repel the inroads on our borders.
Whether it be, that all on martial deeds
His soul intent, he spurn inglorious ease,
Or that his fancy still on Ina dwell,
The court he shuns, and its gay soft delights;
And late, when at the tournament, proclaim'd
In honour of the beauteous Edelfleda,
He bore the prize from all the knights of name,
Neglectful of the princess,—at her feet
He placed nor sword nor trophy,—but abrupt
Broke from the lists, unmindful and discourteous.

MORDRED.

Justly the haughty princess is offended.

Enter BALDRED.

BALDRED.

My Liege, I come from Edelfleda's presence,
A messenger unwilling—to declare

Her sudden purpose, ere the nuptial rites
Have seal'd the bond of union 'twixt the states,
'To seek her father's court.

OSWALD.

My sovereign Lord!

The public weal at stake—

MORDRED.

Prevent her purpose—

Delay not, sire, to solemnize the nuptials.

CENULPH.

But *she* must first be soothed.—

OSWALD.

The prince alone

Can bend her proud neck to the gentle yoke

She would be woo'd to wear.—

CENULPH.

Retire, my friends,—

Alwyn, find thou my son. Thou know'st his haunts.

Command him to my presence in my closet.

I must be firm—my crown, my honour, all

Must be secured this day by his obedience.

I have too long been passive.—Mark me, Alwyn,

For thou dost hold, I know, the master key

That locks his inmost counsel; nay, with voice

Of soft persuasion, while thou seem'st to yield,

Dost bend his lofty spirit to thy reason:

See that he come disposed to do my pleasure.

It is *the King* who will confer with him.

Tell him he has too long abused *the father*.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE III.

Ina's Bower.

EGBERT and INA.

EGBERT.

Oh, yes! I was indeed to blame, my love.

Too much I yielded to the timid counsel

Of cautious Alwyn.

INA.

Thou wast not to blame.

Thy mother's fondness, and her sov'reign sway

O'er thy kind father's heart;—her care for me,

The orphan daughter of her earliest friend——

EGBERT.

And thy brave father, too, whose loyal breast

Received the dagger aim'd at Cenulph's life——

INA.

And at his feet expired!

EGBERT.

Oh! these were hopes
And claims, that sanction'd well the confidence
With which I snatch'd thee to my beating bosom,
Call'd thee my wife! my dear, my honour'd wife!
And swore that thou should'st be ere long acknowledg'd
By Cenulph, his throne's heiress, and his daughter.

INA.

Thou could'st not then foresee that cruel death
Would rob us of the queen, and our best hopes.

EGBERT.

But that I did respect my father's sorrow,
I then had at his feet confess'd my fault—
Ha! said I *fault* to love such excellence?

INA (*starting*).

Methought I heard approaching steps; each sound
Appals me, since I live a sad recluse,
With thoughts—tho' not of guilt—that shun the light.

EGBERT.

This is my worst reproach!—That virtue's self
Should be by me condemn'd to own the fears
Which only guilt should know.

Enter ALWYN.

INA.

It is kind Alwyn:

Welcome, my friend. Oh! soothe his troubled mind,
That dwells with too much pain on our lost hopes.

ALWYN.

Alas! I am the bearer of worse pain.
Ye have heard that Ethelbald has taken arms—
The offended princess past all hope estranged.—
The king, awaken'd by th' indignant lords,
And by the people's murmurs, which have reach'd
At length his careless ear, in angry mood,
Has sent me to command you to his presence,
To press,—I fear—with Edelfleda——

EGBERT.

Peace!

'Twere sacrilege to utter such a thought
As now hangs on thy lip.—

INA.

My much-lov'd lord!

Oh! hear good Alwyn: hear him patiently.—
Too long we fondly from our thoughts have driven
The frightful future in our present bliss.

EGBERT.

And would'st thou I should hear him bid me wed
With Edelfleda?—Cast *thee* from me?—*thee*!
By every holy tie my wedded wife!

ALWYN.

But by the laws, alas! and king, not sanction'd!

EGBERT.

Can human laws o'ermaster the divine?
Tear from a mother's breast her infant joy,
And bid a father's heart not own his child?
Can a king's breath annul the thing that is?

INA.

Be calm, my Egbert! oh! it is not thus
By eager words of fruitless controversy
We can avert the ill, or find the means
To reconcile our duty and our love.
I will retire, and leave thee with our friend:
Yes, my loved lord! true friendship has more skill
To work our good than our self-blinded judgment.
It knows not passion—for it takes the soul
Out of the earthy mould where passion lurks,
To watch,—a guardian spirit,—o'er the weal
Of its true object: as the sun it shines
For others' good!—still giving, without thought
Of like return! so high! so pure! so bounteous!
Oh! I do think kind angels lend to friendship
Some touch of their divinity, to raise
Th' aspiring thought to heavenly harmony! [Exit.

EGBERT (*gazing after her*).

She is herself that heaven of harmony!
Oh! Alwyn! blest in Ina's love, thy friend
Is lost to life's low cares.

ALWYN.

Too true, my prince ;
In voluntary blindness thou hast pass'd
Thy thoughtless days of visionary bliss ;
But I must rudely rouse thee from thy trance,
And bid thee look, with eye firm fix'd, e'en now
On all the fearful truth.

EGBERT.

Speak on.—I am calm.

ALWYN.

The king expects thee. He will press thy marriage
With Edelfleda.

EGBERT.

Alwyn, were I not
To Ina bound by ties so dear, so sacred—
Oh ! no—I could not think of Edelfleda
But as a sister. Once to Mercia's court
I went a stripling, ere the feud arose
That sever'd us, and plunged the states in war.
In th' op'ning splendour of her awful beauty
I honoured her with boyish reverence.

ALWYN.

And woo'd the Mercian princess—yes, you woo'd her :
Whisper'd gay flatteries in her willing ear
At banquets, tournaments, and courtly revels.

EGBERT.

Well, grant I did so—'twas a stripling's homage
At beauty's shrine: she was of riper years.

ALWYN.

Two summers more had but matured her charms,
And not impair'd. You woo'd her, in good sooth.

EGBERT.

Nay, why insist? I had not then seen Ina.
Who shall resist his fate?

ALWYN.

Resist his *will*,
More aptly had express'd your thought.

EGBERT.

My friend,
Thou wert not wont thus keenly to retort.

ALWYN.

Nor would I now, were not the ruin imminent,
And no redress save one. I crave your patience:
You have abused the princess, much abused.

EGBERT.

How shall I soothe her but at honour's price?
How speak, and not redouble my offence,
Disclosing all the truth?

ALWYN.

Thou'rt new to love,
If thou know'st not how lightly we believe

What we too fondly wish ! The heart forlorn
Will snatch e'en from a word, a look, a nothing,
A fearful hope of sweet returning kindness.
Avert her anger, you avert the sword
Upheaved by Ethelbald t' avenge his daughter.

EGBERT.

But said'st thou not, the king would urge the nuptials ?

ALWYN.

Uncertain of thy *love*, the haughty princess
Will spurn the hand but offer'd as the pledge
Of union 'twixt the states.

EGBERT.

Oh ! let me rather
Shun the wrong'd princess' presence, or declare
My wedded faith : I know not to dissemble.

ALWYN.

Yes ; shut your eyes, and let the ruin come !
Nay, nay, my prince, hear me ! The veteran bands,
Not yet dismiss'd by peace to their far homes,
On the fresh news that Ethelbald has arm'd,
Demand thee as their leader. I but ask,
That thou dissemble till the trumpet summon
To arms the late disbanded men of Wessex.

EGBERT.

And wherefore, friend ?

ALWYN.

The chief who sways as thou

His soldier's hearts, may, with best vantage, treat
With angry Mercia, or repel his rage ;
Best may avert, or over-awe the vengeance
At Ina aim'd. 'Tis for thy wife, thyself,
I plead, no less than for the state ; and ask
But that thou play awhile the cautious part.
Be rul'd by me—conceal thy marriage still
A little space.

EGBERT.

I will: and bend my spirit
To cold occasion. Yes, for Ina's love
I will defile that singleness she prized.
Alwyn, I had mark'd the crooked ways of courts,
And in the arrogant dreams of boyhood, shaped
To myself a course of future glory
So proudly honest! but I find that he
Who would hold on the broad and open way,
Not once may swerve aside, howe'er allured.

ALWYN.

Your father waits—Come on, my friend.

EGBERT.

I come.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT II.—SCENE I.

CENULPH, OSWALD, &c.

CENULPH.

And has a king no friend? Would no one tell
What, it seems, *all* or knew or did suspect?
And have his secret visits been so frequent
To this abandon'd woman? Artful fiend!
Well might she meekly thus retire content,
And shun the public gaze, as I commanded;
When, at her feet, all languishing with love,
Lay Cenulph's son, the heir of Wessex' throne!
Ye all have been in league—are traitors all!

OSWALD.

My liege, you wrong our faith. It is but now
I learn what I have given to your ear.

CENULPH.

By night, say'st thou, he from the camp would steal?

OSWALD.

Ev'n so, my liege. When, in the crimson west,
Mantled in blushing clouds, the sun went down,
Each order given, the prince would mount his steed;

Swift as the winds, and as direct his course,
He topp'd the mountain, skimm'd the valley, plunged
Into the foaming river, stemm'd the current,
And reach'd the bower where Ina waited him ;
Then, ere the grey light streak'd the eastern sky,
With course as rapid, he regain'd the camp.

CENULPH.

Perdition seize the sorceress ! That the child
Of Sigiswold, my youth's first friend, in age
My counsellor—who in th' extreme of peril
Gave me his life.—Leave me. [*Exit* OSWALD.

The soldiers, too—
Who hailed him first but as their good king's son—
Sought but to trace in the young eagle's bearing
Some semblance of the sire—

Enter ALWYN.

ALWYN.

Prince Egbert waits.
May I beseech your grace, assail the prince
With gentle speech. Howe'er his spirit rage
Beneath the iron curb of harsh control,
His heart will answer every tender touch
With readiest sympathy.

CENULPH.

He must, he shall,
This very day, espouse fair Edelfleda.

OSWALD.

Nay, my good lord. She too must now be won
To give her hand; but that would cost small pains
To Egbert's self, might he be brought to wish it.
'Tis to this end I would that you urge home
To his warm, generous nature, all the ruin,
Dishonour to your crown—the thousand mischiefs
That hang on his refusal, till his heart
Embrace *our* cause, forgetful of its *own*.

CENULPH.

I hear his steps—away! I will suppress
My anger, Oswald, and will touch each string
That readiest vibrates in the generous breast.
Attend the princess hither. She requests
A private audience. [Exit OSWALD.

In Cambria's fastnesses
The Druid seers, with hymns and sounding strings,
To such religious frenzy work the soul,
That mothers dash, before their gods, exulting,
Their sucklings to fierce flames. Hang on my lips
The golden phrase of patriots! so to grace
The cause of public virtue, that my son,
Alike exulting, from his breast may dash
This worthless woman's love!

Enter EGBERT.

Egbert, draw near :

Sit thou beside me. I am old, and worn
By a long reign of war—of cruel bloodshed,
It was not mine t' avert. The throne I fill
Will soon be thine, and I would know from thee
Thy thoughts of the high office.

EGBERT.

Oh! my father!

As yet unknowing but of martial rule,
To rouse, direct, or quell the soldier's rage—
Of *thee* I hope to learn each exercise
Of peaceful government.

CENULPH.

And dost thou think
To learn of me to hold the throne of Wessex,
But as a larger means to do thy pleasure?
To hold the people but as flocks, nor care
How many swell th' account of them that bleed,
If but thy giddy passions be indulged?

EGBERT.

How should I learn of thee these tyrant maxims;
Thou, who hast ever sought thy people's good?

CENULPH.

If such has been the measure of *my* sway,

How much must wiser Egbert scorn his father !
Egbert, who rather would unbar the gates,
And hail, with impious welcome, the invader,
Than aught control his idlest appetite.

EGBERT.

No, my loved father ; I would give my life
To save thy simplest peasantry from ill.
Oh ! let me prove it in the field of glory,
And pour forth all my blood !

CENULPH.

Go to, rash boy ;
'Tis not thy blood thy country asks of thee :
'Tis not thy blood can make thy father happy :
No, if thou hadst but entertain'd such thoughts
As suit thy royal birth, thou hadst, ere this,
Assured our people's welfare and thine own.
Now, 'tis too late ; the sword is drawn that dooms
Thousands to pay the forfeit of thy fault,
While thou wilt, thoughtless, revel in light joys
I blush to think upon !

EGBERT (*much affected*).

My guilty soul !
Each word a deadly weapon ! Oh ! my father !

CENULPH.

A princess mock'd by nuptials vainly promised !
My name, my crown, branded with foul dishonour !

I shall not long survive this sum of ill;
Thus parricide will heap the monstrous measure
Of thy licentious deeds!—

EGBERT (*terrified*).

Most horrible!

Are there no means? Oh, point the way, my father,
To thy unworthy son! Let *me* alone
Meet the uplifted sword of Ethelbald,
And free thy people from the threat'ning foe;
Nor from a subject's veins one precious drop
Distain the peaceful soil.—

CENULPH.

It is well said.—

Insult a princess,—break her generous heart;—
And murder then her father!—

EGBERT (*clasping his hands*).

Wretch accursed!

Am I so deep in guilt?

CENULPH (*taking his hand kindly*).

Not yet, my son;

But such the course thou headlong dost pursue.

EGBERT (*eagerly*).

Not yet? and is there time? Oh, then thy son
Will act a worthier part.

CENULPH.

Why, this is well.—

I will ascribe to wild unbridled youth
What late hath reach'd my ear. Not wanton smiles,
Soft lispings lips, and braided locks, the toys
One born to rule should sport with—save indeed,
As he would, at the careless banquet, quaff
The luscious mead, each graver care discharged.
But see, my son, fair Edelfleda comes.
Think of her wrongs: you woo'd her, won her love.
She came a stranger to a foreign court,
Abused by hollow promises, and hopes,
That in high souls will sicken to despair
Ere yet the lofty brow betray a pang.

EGBERT.

Much injured princess! Villain that I am!
I know her generous nature: at her feet
I will pour forth my soul—atone my fault—
Oh yes—she will forgive—will pity—

Enter EDELFLEDA and BERTHA.

EDELFLEDA (*aside to BERTHA*).

Bertha,

May I believe my senses? have I wrong'd him?

CENULPH (*to EDELFLEDA*).

Thou, unawares, hast heard my son declare
What a rude soldier's plain unpractised tongue,
Awed by thy charms, had ill express'd to thee.

EDELFLÉDA (*watching* EGBERT).

Royal Cenulph! I but claimed your patience
To ask such escort—as becomes—my state,—
Unto my father's capital—in—Mercia:
This was my errand—nor thought I to meet
One—almost—grown a stranger—in this presence.

CENULPH.

Doubtless, fair princess, if it be thy wish
Thy native court to visit, and thy father,
When the new season smiles with happy omen,
Thou shalt have royal escort, as befits us,
And love shall guide thee, Hymen light thy way,—
Meet convoy for the beauteous Edelfleda,
And mine and Mercia's daughter!

EDELFLÉDA.

Royal sir,
As Mercia's daughter *only* must I go.
Nor can as *Mercia's* daughter brook delay.
I claim no other title.

CENAPH.

Thy father pleads in vain: speak thou, my son.
Thou may'st prevail on filial love, perhaps,
(Though much I honour this its pious wish),
Awhile to yield its claim to claims more sweet,
And yet more powerful.

EGBERT (*much embarrassed*).

Fair Edelfleda!

Thou know'st our youth, contracted by our fathers ;
Ere yet our hearts had spoken, we were doom'd
By Hymen's bonds to ratify the peace
Betwixt two war-worn nations.

EDELFLADA.

Oh ! sad lot
Of royal slaves, who thus are bought and sold !
But no, Prince Egbert—no, not so, our fathers
Barter'd with their children's hearts. Mutual
The affection—mutual—once—the tie—and I
Shall still esteem—thy virtues, Prince—shall still
Bear with me the remembrance of thy worth,—
Though far—far—distant.

[She turns away to hide emotion.]

EGBERT.

Say not so—Oh, hear me,
Unworthy as I am : in pity hear me !
It was not thus erewhile you turn'd away.
Reverse this harsh decree, and from remorse,
Or worse destruction, if worse be, save him
Who once found favour in thy sight : nay, turn—
Turn, gracious Edelfleda !

EDELFLADA.

Might I think
That from thy heart these words of gentler import—
Might I believe—the slighted—Edelfleda—

Indeed—were—I adjure thee, on thy soul,
Trifle not, Egbert, trifle not!—be plain!

EGBERT.

Not though the axe were lifted o'er my head,
Could I one moment longer, by feign'd words,
Abuse thy generous temper. Hence, base art!
Dissimulation, hence! Speak nature! truth!

[Throwing himself at her feet.]

See, princess, at thy feet a wretched man,
Bowed to the level of the peasant swain,
Who trembles for the lowly roof that shelters
His wife and little ones!

CENULPH.

What mean thy words?

EGBERT (*with dignity, rising*).

I am, like him, a husband and a father!

[EDELFLÉDA sinks into BERTHA'S arms.]

CENULPH.

Darest thou avow it?—Ha! rash youth, beware!
Thou art a subject still, nor could'st thou pledge
Thy faith, unsanctioned by thy king! thy father!
My royal word was given to Ethelbald.

EGBERT.

King! there are ties of nature stronger far
Than even those convention has stamp'd sacred
'Twixt man and man, by social compact bound.

The rudest savage, howling amid deserts,
That tears his vanquish'd foe, devours his flesh,
And quaffs his smoking blood, does yet defend
His mate, the mother of his babes, with wild
And desperate love; and meekest things that creep,
Or wing the air, in nature's dearest cause
Will brave destruction from the spoiler's rage.
I am a husband, king! I am a father!

CENULPH.

Guards! secure the traitor.

Enter Guards and ALWYN.

ALWYN (*aside*).

Who now will shield poor Ina?

EGBERT.

Her Egbert will!

(*To the guards.*) Off, sirs! first take my life!

[*The guards fall back.*]

ALWYN.

Oh! yield, dear prince!

Yield, if the life of Ina yet be precious!

EGBERT.

My Ina! for thy sake— [*Gives his sword to the guards.*]

Sirs! take my sword!

And now my chains!

[*The guards approach fearfully and reluctantly to chain him.*]

CENULPH.

Why tremble ye? Obey!

EDELFLADA (*recovering*).

Monarch! grown hoary in deceit and fraud!
Leagued with thy worthless son to insult me thus!
Ye shall for this feel Ethelbald's dread arm:
Hurl'd from your throne, and prostrate at his feet,
Shall sue in vain for mercy, while your cries,
The cries of Ina—e'en her infant's cries—
Shall fall as sweetest music on my ear.
Ev'n now great Ethelbald is on your borders;
'Twas *I* unsheath'd his sword! 'Tis *I* who guide it!
And none but *I* can turn its edge aside!

[*Exit with* BERTHA.

CENULPH (*to* EGBERT).

Thus, wretch accursed! is this devoted land,
Her wounds scarce closed, and scarce renew'd her
strength,
By thee to war's fell demons given again;
Nor though th' abandon'd, the perfidious Ina,
Were doom'd to pay the forfeit of her crime,
By deep disgrace, by death in lingering torments—

EGBERT.

Ha! torments? lingering torments, said'st thou, tyrant?
But Heaven's own angels watch o'er innocence!
Nor can there be conceal'd in human shape

The fiend could touch her with a hand of harm!
The most remorseless villain, bred to blood,
Fierce creature of thy fiercer will, would shrink
At sight of Ina, in the majesty
Of virtue, beauty, youth, distress!

CENULPH.

Away!

Guards! drag him hence. Ha! Osric in such haste!

Enter OSRIC.

OSRIC.

My liege, with rapid march the King of Mercia
Advances on thy frontier. Deadly his rage!
His powers, the breathless messengers declare,
Rush as a torrent with impetuous course
On the devoted land. No order taken,
Confusion and dark mutiny prevail
Among our troops. The surly soldiers, murmuring,
Demand Prince Egbert at their head.

CENULPH.

Prince Egbert?

What? to a traitor shall I trust my cause?

OSRIC.

Such confidence in him each soldier feels,
Such love, such loyalty: I know it well,

They will fall off, or coldly meet the foe,
If any other leader——

CENULPH.

Is it so?

Then is it time I yield my forfeit sceptre,
Lest he with impious hand should wrest it from me!

*[He throws down his sceptre, crown, or any emblem
of royalty.]*

Guards, free the man who henceforth is your king,
And do with me as does the graceless churl,
Who lays the axe, remorseless, to the oak,
That stretch'd its sheltering arms o'er his forefathers,
When wintry winds have stript its leafy pride.

EGBERT (*rushing to him with passionate tenderness*).

See me, my honour'd father, at thy feet!

Oh speak not words that cut my heart asunder!

Resume thy honours—— *[Giving him the sceptre.]*

See thy humblest subject!

Oh show some signs of pardon and of comfort,
That I may say thy son—thy penitent son.

Yes, trust thy cause to me—to thee I trust

All that my soul holds dear—my wife! my child!

[After a pause, taking his hand with great emotion.]

If I should fall, they will be dear to thee.

CENULPH.

Oh Egbert! Egbert! thou go'st near to break

Thy father's heart. Thou *wast* a duteous son.
Once more I trust thee, nor admit the thought
Thou *yet* hast practised aught disloyal. Leave me.
Alwyn, thy arm.

[*EGBERT offers his assistance, and CENULPH puts him away.*]

Nay, I would be alone.

[*Exit CENULPH with ALWYN.*]

EGBERT (*alone*).

'Tis Alwyn's arm supports him—not his son's!
Alas! this keen rebuke is just, my father:
Yet dost thou trust me; and thy confidence,
So precious, shall be justified by service
Thou look'st not for at my unworthy hands.

Re-enter ALWYN.

ALWYN.

My royal friend—I tremble but to think
Of thy imprudence.—How avert the ills——

EGBERT.

Alwyn, no ill awaits the upright course!
This dark concealment! 'twas the only stain
My bosom knew.—Oh! could'st thou guess the load
It has thrown off! how buoyant all is *here*!
Avert what ill? for, grant I lose a crown,
(An awful charge, not merely a gay circlet

To grace the brow) integrity remains!
Were I not happier? ay, and worthier too—
A sturdy peasant, with undaunted front,
Grappling with stern adversity, than wielding
Sceptres by wrong obtained, or violence
To inbred honesty:—my friend, I have led
My countrymen to battle: each bosom owned
As brave a heart, and in his country's cause
As warm as mine—and haply each, like me,
Had his heart's partner too at home, who trembled,
And wept for him, as Ina for her Egbert.
There is a brotherhood in tented fields,
Where all with equal venture play for lives,
That wakes a consciousness we are but men,
And men alike, till worth has made distinction.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT III.—SCENE I.

EDELFLADA, BERTHA.

EDELFLADA.

Leave me, good Bertha; thy officious love
But wearies me.

BERTHA.

Thy pardon, dearest mistress.

EDELFLADA.

These cumbrous robes, these idle ornaments,
Oppress my bosom. Thou hast deck'd me out
As 'twere a victim for the sacrifice.—
I am the victim! thou hast wisely done!

BERTHA.

The artful Baldred rules King Cenulph's mind;
Nay, can compel, some say, the stubborn fates,
By prayers, and penance, and mysterious rites.
Through his means haply thou may'st triumph yet.

EDELFLADA.

Yes! I *will* triumph yet—but if the means
Recoiling fancy dare but faintly shadow,
Oh Bertha! Bertha! dost thou think kind nature

Form'd me for darkest deeds? Oh, no! her hand
Temper'd my soul to gentleness and love,
And stamp't it with a royal loftiness;
But it is given in possession now
To such a friend!—so irresistible!

[*Hiding her face in BERTHA'S bosom.*]

Thou'rt good and kind!—oh! throw me from thy heart!
I never more shall there deserve a place.

BERTHA.

That heart is thine, my princess,—owns no bounds
To its devotion! nay, take hope—take comfort—
Th' astonish'd king was as thyself indignant.
Thou saw'st the prince in chains! King Cenulph loves
thee—
He will annul the marriage.

EDELFLADA.

How annul it?

Not if *she* live! he cannot sunder hearts.
No, if she *live*—it is impossible.
I would have fled ere the ungentle wish
That *she* were not——

BERTHA.

Then think of her as dead!
Thy wish might stamp her doom.

EDELFLADA (*with horror*).

What, murder her!

BERTHA.

Not that.—Stern policy has instruments
Secret and sure. Thou know'st the envious abbot
Beneath that saintly garb wraps deadly hate.

EDELFLADA.

Let me not *hear*—nor *guess* what thou would'st say.
It will be mine to soothe him when 'tis done!
I must not bear the horrid consciousness
About my heart;—for I will win his love
By virtue *then*, by tenderness, and patience!
Then did I say? ah, *then*! what thought was that
My guilty soul admitted? oh! is virtue
So convenient? *will* she? *can* she dwell again
In the polluted bosom she forsook?
Or if she could—remorse must usher her!
Unutterable woe!—oh, save me!—save me!

[*After a pause.*]

One only means is left may yet preserve
These hands from stain of blood. Some pitying angel
Whispers the thought.—Come, Bertha! let us haste.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

BALDRED (*alone*).

Too long, methinks, the king confers with Egbert.
He leads the army!—I would have it so.—
The time has been men fell in fight.—Death ruled
Unquestion'd *there*.—Yet now, methinks, for him
All weapons lose their edge!—But has this head
Forgot the means t' effect this bosom's purpose?
I hate her now—yet envy him his joys.
Yes, but for him I had won her—but for him
In love's full confidence had met those eyes,
Had clasp'd that hand in love.

Enter EGBERT.

EGBERT.

What! murmur'st thou of confidence and joy?
Of eyes that meet, and hands that clasp in love!

BALDRED.

That sinful in their sweetness are these things,
And as rank weeds that wear a gaudy blossom,
Should be uprooted from the wholesome soil;
While, as the liberal herbage spreading wide,
Or sacred grain, friendly to general life,
The public weal alone should be our care.

EGBERT.

These maxims, holy kinsman, are severe
For one erewhile a gay, a gallant soldier.
What! for the public weal would'st thou uproot
That which does make the public weal our care?
Why fill the eyes with tears? Why leaps the heart?
"Our country" but the theme of our discourse?
We love the land where first the light of heaven
Broke on our eyes!—dear by all childhood's joys!
Her soil enfolds our fathers' honour'd bones!
Our friends and kinsmen reap her golden harvests!
But there are ties! which thou hast thrown from thee,
That more than *these* endear our country's name!
That brace the thrilling nerves, and swell the bosom—
Doubling the powers and energies of man!

BALDRED.

Ha! did *I* throw from me those ties? (howe'er
My heaven-ward thoughts despise them now!) thou
treach'rous,
Thou gay insinuating flatterer!—thou,
Who stealing on the promise of my bliss——

EGBERT.

'Tis false, proud priest! Her love was mine, ere thou
Hadst with loathed passion gazed on Ina's charms.
She ever hated thee!—

BALDRED.

Thou say'st so, boaster!

Haply my soldiers' hearts alike were thine,
Ere I had led them forth.—I! who so long
Fenced with this arm thy father's tottering throne
Against dread Ethelbald.—

EGBERT.

Hold, Baldred, hold!

I grant my father's throne was sore beset
When mighty Ethelbald came thundering on.
But force me not to say *who* fenced his throne.

BALDRED.

Nay, doubly treacherous was thy part! thou cam'st
Prank'd in gay youth, and glittering novelty—
With idle promises, alluring wiles—
And won the dastard knaves, who had forsook me,
To turn again with swift recoiling force
On the triumphant foe; thus foully wresting
The dear-earn'd meed of longer services.

EGBERT.

Vain reasoner! true; the flying bands I rallied
By promises, *not* idle, if fulfill'd!
Nor robb'd thee of the meed of victory,—
For on thy brow I would have placed her wreath.

BALDRED.

'Twas all hypocrisy!—'twas insult all!

Thou still hast wrong'd me,—but I scorn thee still.
Fortune's sleek minion! Flattery's demi-god!
Awhile thou yet may'st flutter in their sunshine,
A gay-wing'd insect, till the northern blast
From short existence sweep thee, while the eagle
Towers in her native skies!

EGBERT.

Peace! coward priest!
Who thus secure, beneath that saintly garb,
Dost blacken worth, and rail at envied greatness.

BALDRED.

Thy worth I own not, nor thy fleeting greatness.
Power is true greatness! Go, guide thou the sword
Thousands of sinews wield! but *I* can slack
Those sinews that they loose their hold. *Thus* wrapt,
I sway by holy awe the souls of men,
And am superior in superior *power*!

EGBERT.

I mock thy blustering impotence and pride,
But I respect the garb thou dost abuse,
And, therefore, priest, I unchastised will leave thee,
While yet my better thoughts restrain my arm.
[Exit.

BALDRED.

Thinks he to awe me by his lofty carriage?
And shall my spirit stand rebuked by his?

Shall I, in blood his equal,—hang the head?
 Wondering, confess his rare endowments? Hail him
 With idiot incense as the vulgar use?
 There are tame spirits who recline content
 Beneath the greatness that o'ershadows them.
 The timid herds, denied by nature fangs
 To wage offensive war, will throng together—
 Obscure equality! The lion stalks *
 Alone!—unrivall'd he!—the lonely tiger
 Leaps single on his prey!—these brook no equal;
 Nor will I, crouching, a superior own! [Exit.

SCENE III.

Ina's Bower.

INA, *watching over her sleeping child*; ALICE, BLANCH,
 &c.

INA.

Sing me, dear maids, the lullaby I love;
 'T will soothe my infant's slumbers, and may speed
 The lagging wing of time till Egbert come.

* This was first printed in 1815.

SONG BY ALICE AND BLANCH.

ALICE.

Lull my babe in rosy slumbers,
Whisper sounds that die away,
Utter none but drowsy numbers,
Luring dewy sleep to stay.

BOTH.

Lullaby, lullaby,
Hush my babe with lullaby.

BLANCH.

But if on a brighter morrow
Ope his eyelids laughing gay,
Careless notes of light joy borrow,
Lest his mother's tears betray
He wakens to a world of sorrow.

BOTH.

Merrily, merrily,
Maidens, then, sing merrily.

INA.

Thanks, my good girls:—yet, Alice, Egbert comes not.
It seems an age that I have fix'd my eyes
On that sweet sleeping innocence, thus hoping

To lose the consciousness of each sad moment
That slowly drags its length till he return.

ALICE.

The noble Alwyn went with him, dear mistress ;
Thou know'st his prudence well.

INA.

Still Egbert comes not.

ALICE (*after looking at the child*).

His sleeping features wear a joyous smile,
And see, he stretches forth his little hands !
Regard it as a happy omen, madam.

INA.

Kind Alice, thanks. Would my sad heart could do so !
Poor helpless slumberer ! oh ! had I been born
A village maid ! a cottager, my Egbert !
The war of elements the only danger
That threaten'd our low roof—thy innocent smile
Had waken'd but a mother's honest joy,
Nor chill'd my heart, as now, with nameless fears.

ALICE.

Alas ! the sadden'd fancy gives its colour
To all it rests upon, and often paints
In objects of delight some idle terror.

INA.

Hark ! Alice, hark ! feel how my poor heart beats !
Some dreadful ill hangs o'er us ! It must come,

The hour of vengeance.—Royalty insulted !
A father's love deceived !—Alice ! how guilty
Do I appear to my affrighted conscience
Whene'er my Egbert tarries long away ;
But when he comes,—and when I hear his voice
And meet his eye,—and feel how I am loved—
And with what full devotion I am his,
It seems not only happiness, but virtue,
Glory, and honour !—all, are mine—and lift
My proud heart——

ALICE.

Now I hear a busy stir !
Sure 'tis the prince !

INA (*hastening to meet him*).

My lord, my life, my husband !

[*Meets EDELFLEDA, who enters with BERTHA.*

EDELFLEDA *measures her with her eyes as she
totters back to ALICE.*

EDELFLEDA.

Why do you tremble, madam, and turn pale ?
I own that this intrusion can be warranted
By none but its true motive.

INA.

Motive ! princess ?

What motive prompts the gentle mind to seek
The unhappy,—but some courteous, kindly impulse ?

And your eyes speak not such. Some dire mischance
Perhaps—oh! tell me—tell me all—and with one blow—
Alice—support me—— [*Sinks into ALICE's arms.*]

EDELFLADA (*aside to BERTHA*).

Is she so beautiful
As to my tortured soul my eyes present her?

BERTHA.

'Tis but the beauty of the menial train.
The royal air is wanting.

EDELFLADA.

Say'st thou so?

Ah, no! that timid softness wins its way
More surely to the heart.—I, too, were gentle,
If I, like her, were blest.

BERTHA.

Perversely thus
Ingenious jealousy will rack itself
To deck its object.

EDELFLADA.

Jealousy no longer,
But hate, contempt, and vengeance——

(*To INA, who recovers*). I am sorry
That you anticipate what I would say.
If thus thou swoon while yet in ignorance,
How wilt thou tear with self-destructive passion
Those tresses in their dark luxuriance bound

With skilful negligence around thy brow!
Deface that matchless beauty with thy hands,
Play o'er each practised act of desperation!
When thou art told,—the prince thou hast enthrall'd,
In a vile dungeon, bound with traitor's chains,
Awaits the doom of his disloyalty.

INA.

Have mercy! heavenly powers! imprison'd! chain'd!
But no—it cannot be—thou com'st to prove me.
Thou too hast loved him, lady, and thou could'st not,
Oh no, thou could'st not thus unmoved declare,
That he whom thou hast loved—impossible!
Thy voice had falter'd, and thy tears had flow'd!
Yes, thou hadst pitied me, and kindred sorrow
Had one short moment link'd our adverse souls.

EDELFLADA.

Who tells thee, insolent! I love the prince?
Or ever loved the base degenerate Egbert?
'Tis true that policy had doom'd our hands
To a forced union once—and *therefore* was he
Sacred to such as *thou*!—treason the thought
In any subject's breast to match with him.

INA.

If it be treason, I alone am guilty.
Treason regards but the aspiring subject;
Nor can the same be charged on yielding greatness.

Then plead for me in this, howe'er thou hate me.

Plead for me, royal Edelfleda! Claim

For *me* the chains he wears (if it be so

That he indeed does wear them); set *him* free:

[*Kneeling.*

I, I alone have sinn'd against the laws!

The king, and him, and thee!

EDELFLADA.

All! all! thou fiend!

And think'st thou it can aught atone my wrongs,

Though low I see thee, grov'ling at my feet?

Off, shameless woman! Shameless Egbert's choice!

INA (*rising, and with dignity*).

The woman honour'd by Prince Egbert's choice,

Founds on that choice her claim to more respect.

As Egbert's wife, I must withdraw from one

Unmindful what to Egbert's wife is due.

[*Turning to ALICE.*

Raise gently, Alice, my sweet infant boy,

Lest he affrighted wake; then follow me.

EDELFLADA (*stopping ALICE, and gazing passionately
on the child*).

Oh Heaven! Is this his child?

INA.

Madam, it is.

You startle him. I pray you speak more softly.

Ungentle tones ne'er wounded yet his ear.

EDELFLÉDA.

Nay, take it hence. I know not why I look'd on't.

[INA, &c. *going*.

I had forgot the purpose of my visit;

Will you not stay and hear it?

[INA *returns*. EDELFLÉDA *softens her tone*.

Ina, say—

Would'st thou Prince Egbert, whom thou *call'st* thy
husband,

Were freed from prison, and from shameful death?

I come to tell thee how to compass this.

INA.

Oh! pardon, gracious princess! that my ignorance

Misjudged your generous purpose. Yet goodness, sure,

Ne'er wore before such haughty looks and tones

As you ev'n now did lend her. Name the means!

Weak as I am, my courage will not shrink

In such a cause, from any fearful task.

EDELFLÉDA.

There needs to save him, but that thou forego

The idle title thou erewhile didst boast;

For, as thou know'st, it is of youth's gay coinage;

Unsanction'd thus—an empty appellation—

Offensive as 'tis empty. Claim it not.

INA.

Princess! I understand you. I am ready,
By *death*, to cancel my pure marriage vow,
That *he* may live, but by no other means;
Nor is it fit I longer parley hold
With *one* who counsels thus Prince Egbert's wife.

[*Exit.*

EDELFLADA (*after watching her in a tumult of
passion*).

Thus scornful to withdraw!—

(*Striking her bosom*). Hell! hell is here!

(*Turning eagerly to BERTHA*).

Didst mark the infant? Had it not his brow?
Methought I could have snatch'd it to my bosom
With transport such as mothers scarce have felt,
And instant came a horror—such a horror!
That I had dash'd the tender form to atoms,
Had I but held it in my shuddering grasp!

BERTHA.

Oh! let us quickly leave this fatal scene!
Too much it racks thy bosom.

EDELFLADA.

How I hate her!

I envy her her very dangers, Bertha.
She claim his chains! 't were mine the right to share them.
Or rather *I* had brought all Mercia's power

T'avenge his wrongs! Nor had *I* proved my love
By tears and prayers, low grov'ling on the earth,
But by such gifts as kingdoms! sceptres! thrones!
Adoring nations kneeling at his feet!

BERTHA.

It yet will be so. This presumptuous woman
Will meet the death she merits, and her image,
Her worthless image, fade from the remembrance
Of *him* who should be yours!

EDELFLADA.

Yes, *mine* by right!
By solemn compact *mine*! Attested *mine*
By witness nations! And thinks she I will yield him?
But, ah! he loves me not! What were his hand,
His cold reluctant hand, without his heart?—
Shall I not find some solace in revenge?—
Yet will that sweeten life like what ev'n now
These eyes have seen?

Enter EGBERT.

EGBERT.

Oh, Heaven! whom find I here?

EDELFLADA.

I came to see this miracle of beauty,
She, for whose fatal charms two realms must lie

In ruin, and for whom Prince Egbert
Remorseless dooms his people to the sword;
And I have seen her. *[Going, he stops her.]*

EGBERT.

Hast thou seen my wife?
Ha! Edelfleda!—How didst thou address her?

EDELFLADA *(contemptuously)*.

As is her due.

EGBERT.

Then as Heaven's fairest work!
As Virtue's brightest gem! as Nature's pride,
Didst thou address her!—and—as Wessex' princess!

EDELFLADA.

Say, rather, as a subject too aspiring,
Presumptuous, and vain; who gave her ear
To idle flatteries from royal lips,
And swerved from honour's path. I would have saved her,
But she scorn'd my counsel.

EGBERT *(eagerly)*.

Save her from what?—

Say, princess! is aught practised against Ina?

EDELFLADA *(going)*.

Nay, it imports not me.—I would depart.

EGBERT *(stopping her)*.

Oh, Edelfleda! I have held thee noble,
Have ever honour'd thee.

EDELFLEDA.

Ye powers supreme !
Oh hear his words ! mark his unblushing brow !
Thou ! thou hast honour'd me ?—hast held me noble ?
And didst thou honour me in Cenulph's presence,
When late—oh ! grant me patience, Heaven ! an hour,
A little hour has scarce elapsed,—since mock'd,
Insulted—scorn'd.

EGBERT.

This keen reproach were due
Had I thy royal nobleness mistrusted ;
'Twas from thy generous nature that I hoped
For help and stay in this my utmost need.
Canst thou forget when in our earliest youth,
Ere yet the fatal torch of discord blazed,
Severing our houses,—of thy mother 'reft,
Mine proved our common parent ? happy days !

EDELFLEDA (*with emotion*).

And were they happy days to *thee* too, Egbert ?

EGBERT.

Yes, they were days of thoughtless, unmix'd joy.—
Hadst thou, sore press'd with sorrow, said to me,
“ Friend of my youth ! thy help ! ”—Oh, Edelfleda !
What had I not encounter'd in thy service ?
But thou desertest *me*—art my worst foe !—

EDELFLÉDA.

I! I, thy foe?—*I*, who for thy sake live
In torments, fiercer than e'er yet consumed
The guiltiest wretch.—*I*, who but err'd in this,
That yielding to our parents true obedience,
I gave my heart where they had given my hand.

EGBERT (*distressed*).

Princess!—my heart—my hand—no longer mine,—
How often with the secret on my lips,
Sought I, ere this, to throw me at thy feet:
But thy averted looks,—thy cold disdain—
The sudden anger flashing on thy cheek——

EDELFLÉDA.

Were the last struggles of expiring pride!
And hast thou loved? nor know'st love's various lan-
guage?

Tremble, yes tremble, at the bound I've pass'd.
Nothing remain'd to wretched Edelfleda
But pride of soul, and that lies prostrate now.
And dost thou think I will recede? No, Egbert!
Triumph or death be mine!

EGBERT.

Triumph! o'er whom?

EDELFLÉDA.

O'er *her*! the source of all my ill! o'er *her*!—
Who, as the sweeping pestilence, unseen

Stole o'er the tender germ, and blasted it,
That, growing with our growth, unfolding fair,
Had ripen'd into love, and made *me* blest!

EGBERT.

Hold, woman! would'st thou be a vengeful fury?
And will my deadliest hate?—my soul's deep curse——

EDELFLADA.

Thy hatred? yes—thy curse were far less bitter
Than thus to see ye blest.

EGBERT.

Nay, Edelfleda,

Be thyself again!—thou, once so generous!
I, who have wrong'd thee, throw me on thy mercy!
By the new faith that teaches sweet forgiveness!
By my contrition for the outrage done
To thy best feelings! By our early days
Of childish fondness! By our common mother
(For thou didst give her that endearing name!)
And by her dying blessing o'er us breathed,
As we together knelt and mingled tears!
Oh! be thou great, as not to mortal frailty
Has yet been given!—Princess, protect my wife!

Enter INA.

INA.

I hear his voice! 'tis he! my lord! my Egbert!

[*They embrace.*]

Why kneel to *her*? why claim of *her* protection?
And canst not *thou* protect me? *thou*, my husband!

EGBERT.

Alas! my love, I must on the instant hence;
The army claims me, and the king commands.
I can but fold thee to my faithful bosom.

[*They embrace in speechless emotion.*]

My Ina!—oh! I would be firm.—I pray thee
Tremble not thus.—Nay, smile—though forced the smile,
It were a pious fraud, and my poor heart
Will half deceive itself.

INA (*in great distress*).

My lord! my love!

EDELFLÉDA (*aside*).

And must I witness the soft melting eye!
Hear the endearing name! mark all their fondness!
And thus learn each sweet several joy I lose!
And is't of *me* he claims for *her* protection?
Let justice take its course. *He knows* I love,
And therefore *must* be mine: and for *she* knows it,
My pride cannot consent that *she* should live.

[*Exit with* BERTHA.

EGBERT.

Alas! my love, to part with thee is hard;
Never so hard before. Yet, my kind father,
As if repentant of the angry haste

With which he fasten'd ('twas but for a moment)
Chains on thy Egbert, has even now dismiss'd me
With gracious signs of sweet returning love—
With fullest confidence—with ample powers.—
Was it not generous? And think'st thou, Ina,
I will not justify the noble trust?

INA.

Oh, yes! thou wilt a thousand, thousand fold.
Heaven guard thee while this thought impels thy
valour
(As well I know it will) beyond all bounds
Of prudence! Oh! when desperate, thou seek'st
To pluck fair wreaths from danger's hideous brow,
Think of thy Ina! of thy child! and check
Thy daring rashness!

EGBERT.

Nay, it is that valour
Thy love would chide, will best protect thy Egbert,
Restore him worthy of thy tenderness!

INA.

And must I stay so near a treacherous court,
And that fierce woman's hate, now all is known?

EGBERT.

My father will protect thee.

INA.

Can he, Egbert?

Thou know'st the artful sway of cruel Baldred.
Nay, let me go with thee!—See, Alwyn comes.

Enter ALWYN.

Plead for me, Alwyn, that I follow him.

ALWYN.

She must not stay, my friend—Thou art deceived,
Thy father was too gentle. 'Tis not so,
Howe'er the parent may relent—that kings
Can wipe away all trace of injury.
Go, then, my prince, as was appointed, wearing
That open brow—a stranger to mistrust.
When night shall close the eye of vigilance,
And with her friendly mantle shroud our steps,
I will steal forth with Ina, both conceal'd
In such rude weeds as wrap the villager.

INA.

Thou art our guardian angel!—and my child?

ALWYN.

We will not leave him. On his mother's breast
He shall be cradled. On the gentle steed
Thou lov'st so well, for that he brought thy Egbert
So often to thy arms, ye shall be placed,
And I beside you will conduct your steps.

EGBERT.

How for a moment shall I leave thee, love,

Now that a doubt—Oh, no! a doubt would wrong
My father—yet—a fear—Love's idle fear——

INA (*with joy and eagerness*).

I have nor doubt, nor fear. I follow thee,
My lord! my husband! *thee*, my all of bliss!
And bear our mutual treasure in my arms!
Rear'd softly, I ne'er knew life's rougher hour;
Yet shalt thou find me as the rudest peasant,
Hardy, and firm of nerve. If night should wrap
Her brow in clouds, I'll bless the kinder shade
Favouring our flight; or, if her lamp shine forth,
I'll think it is to light me on my way.
The howling wolf shall seem but as a friend,
Scaring who may pursue me (for true love
Never knew fear!) The blust'ring winds that meet me,
I'll hail as eager messengers from thee;
And, if they scatter from their ruffled wings
The driving hail-storm on my houseless head,
I will but lap our infant's mantle close,
And say it is plain nature's ruder welcome.

[*Exeunt severally.*

ACT IV.—SCENE I.

CENULPH (*alone*).

The cheerful day revives me. All night long
In thousand changeful forms my labouring fancy
Presented Sigiswold. The very smile
Beam'd on me still—the smile he wore in death!
He wrung my hand as then; and, as I gazed,
He glared all ghastly, horrible. In agony
I shook off sleep—again I sunk o'erwearied,
And then methought my son came towering on,
Nor touch'd the ground, but in contempt.

Enter OSRIC.

OSRIC.

My liege!
From royal Egbert messengers arrive.

CENULPH.

Conduct them hither. [OSRIC *goes*.
My distemper'd thoughts bode nought but ill.

Enter EDRED.

What tidings from the army?

EDRED.

Prince Egbert greets his father and his king
With duteous love and firmest loyalty;
Already to his banners throng thy subjects
With ardour never witness'd. He had number'd
Ten thousand men in arms ere he dismiss'd us.
The peasant leaves the coulter in the furrow
To snatch his battle-axe, or ponderous spear;
The aged bowman, all unnerved by time,
Grasps the tough yew he can no longer bend.
Ev'n mothers bid their slender striplings arm,
To follow their loved prince! their future king!

CENULPH.

Their future king! say they, "their future king?"
Are they impatient that old Cenulph lives?
It is enough. You may retire. *[Exit EDRED.]*

The prince,
Elated, thinks 'tis but to break a lance
With Ethelbald, and gaily speed him back
To love and Ina. *[He appears in great agitation.]*

Enter BALDRED.

Baldred, thou art welcome!
I think thou art true, nor like the summer courtier,
Dost more affect the prince than thy old master;
Oswald I doubt, and Orgar.—The smooth Alwyn

Is wholly his.—The father's tenderness
Has, more than all, proved traitor to the king.
Did I say *king*? Ah! *king* no longer, Baldred,
Than it may please Prince Egbert!

BALDRED.

True, my liege;
You have cause to fear him.

CENULPH.

Fear him! *Fear* my son?

BALDRED.

Yes, you do fear the prince, and you have cause;
E'en the wolf's whelp will gambol round its dam
With new life's graces:—but ere long, behold
The blood-red eye-balls glare—the keen-hook'd fangs:
Anon th' invaded fold, the slaughter'd flock.
Yes, Egbert was a child—his father's darling—
But now he is a prince, in manhood's prime,
Bold, strong, ambitious—and the soldier's idol.

CENULPH.

Of Egbert's growing honours thou would'st speak,
Nor aught infer of dark design. I said—
I know not what—in moody vein. Thou hast seen
The lambent lightnings flash o'er summer skies;
E'en so a father for a moment chides.
The ominous clouds must heap their sooty volumes,
Shrouding the last blue space of hope, ere yet
The bolt be sped in wrath.

BALDRED.

Nay, trust him till he pluck
The diadem from thy time-silver'd brow.
I can retire within my holy cell,
That, self-defended in its sanctity,
Not shameless vice shall dare to violate;
Welcome to me the sacred fold I left! [Going.

CENULPH.

Stay, Baldred, stay! Think not I bar my ear
Against thy counsel. Yes, my rebel son
Must be reduced to duty and obedience.

BALDRED.

Then must his wanton, Ina, be removed!
There is nor peace, nor safety for the realm,
Till Egbert with the Mercian princess weds.
'Tis but to pluck this canker-worm away—

CENULPH.

And crush it underneath my foot, good Baldred?

BALDRED.

Rather, my liege, to holy keeping yield her.
To the new faith devoted by strong vows,
The veil shall shroud her from his sight for ever;
And from her wiles escaped, the prince once more
Is Wessex' heir, and Cenulph's duteous son.

CENULPH.

The marriage void declared, thyself shall lead

And offer at the holy shrine the victim ;
But she must be compell'd herself to cancel
The idle vow, or Egbert will not yield
To wed as the high views of state demand.
If she refuse—her doom is fix'd—she dies !

BALDRED.

Most wise ! most just !—Yet had not I kept watch,
She had escaped beneath a peasant's garb,
By darkness favour'd.

CENULPH.

Thanks to thy vigilance !
We must be prompt. But I would have the council
Debate on this, and hear her on each charge—
That all may know how just the king's decree.

BALDRED.

The lords, assembled, wait the royal présence.
Ere yet they met, I sounded warily
Each several bosom : they are well advised.
They view with steady eye the general good,
Nor mark the private pang. Leave all to them !
'Tis meet that Alwyn (though we know him false)
Should hold his place among them : he will mark
The *father's* wish to save, ere yet the *king*
And prudent council doom the criminal. [Exeunt.

SCENE II.

The Lords in Council.

FIRST LORD.

Methinks the holy abbot tarries long.

SECOND LORD.

King Cenulph loves his son. It were not easy,
Perchance, to bring him to the point we wish.

ALWYN (*eagerly*).

King Cenulph was the father of his people!
Then how much more the father of his child!
Ere Baldred practised on declining age
To sow dissension—

THIRD LORD.

Hark! I heard their steps.

CENULPH *enters with* BALDRED. *They all rise.*

He takes his seat with due ceremony.

CENULPH.

Have ye, my lords, each several charge prepared
Against this woman? that she may appear,
And answer for her crime?

MORDRED.

We have, my liege.

CENULPH.

We do not wish that she be hardly dealt with,
Nor would we pluck up by the roots a flower
Our son has sometimes foster'd with fond care,
But rather place it, rich in blooming sweets,
An offering on the shrine of public good.

[The lords bow assent.]

Bring in the prisoner! *[INA is brought in, guarded.]*

Holy abbot, speak!

BALDRED.

Daughter of Sigiswold, thou art summon'd hither,
To answer to high charges brought against thee!
Thou hast, by subtle and unlawful arts,
Wrought on the royal heir of Wessex' throne,
And drawn him from his true allegiance;
That he hath broke the faith the king, his father,
Had pledged for him, and thereby brought on us
A bloody war, and on the throne dishonour.

CENULPH.

Speak, Ina, nor dissemble; thy confession
May win stern justice to commit thy cause
To mercy's hands. Say, was't by flatteries,
By honied words thou didst so far prevail?

INA.

My king, my royal master! ever gracious!
Thanks for thy gentler speech, that gives me time

To wake and rouse my senses to these horrors,
So new, so strange, around me, conjured up
To terrify my weakness!—— [*A pause.*]

My confession,
And my defence, are one. On simple truth
I rest. For my good father's services,
Most honour'd Cenulph, and his happy death
(For that he held it happy his last words,
As ye all know, declared), I was advanced
To attend your late loved consort. In her presence
I often saw the prince, but practised nought
Of what ye charge me with. I am not skill'd
In arts unhallow'd, lords, nor even practised
The arts less blamed of courtesy and smiles.
Nay, when through all the realm one voice was heard
Of gratulation on his martial deeds,
Oh! when the widow's tears were dried to bless him!
When age shook off its weight of years for joy!
And children gambol'd round his homeward steps,
While checking his proud steed he smil'd upon them!
And when his boundless heart to all went forth,
To age with filial love! to glowing youth
With all a brother's warmth! To the fall'n foe
With sadden'd grace, as though he blush'd at conquest!
I still was silent—though sweet tears would gush
To hear his praises from a nation's lips!

[*She appears overcome.*]

ALWYN.

It was a glorious triumph for a prince
So young in war's dread lore!

BALDRED.

Such deeds more justly
Had in a simple maid raised distant awe,
Not the ambitious thought to match with him.

INA.

Still was I happy in my secret homage,
(To blame alone in that it border'd much
On what were due to Heaven) nor knew a wish
Beyond what each ensuing hour now gave,
To see him, hear him, and retain each word
His gracious lips let fall; when, on a day,
(How fortunate esteem'd till now!) the queen,
For some slight instance of my duteous care—
The prince assisting—said, "My children, thanks!"
I met Prince Egbert's glance—it bore my fate!
Confused, I hasten'd from the royal chamber.
He follow'd me, and pour'd forth all his soul!
For in those words he read the queen's consent;
Nor did I otherwise interpret them,
Who had no power to think but as he thought.
You, royal Cenulph, then were on the borders,
To treat with Ethelbald. When you return'd
With Mercia's princess—I was Egbert's wife.

CENULPH.

Thy father's services are not forgotten,
With which thou artfully dost usher in
Thy tale of innocence. Although thy deed
In any other were as treason censured,
The worth of Sigiswold shall gloss it over,
And I will pardon thee, if thou retire
Within the walls of some far monastery,
And take the holy vows that sever thee
For ever from the world and all its ties.
This, by thy free consent, and presently!
Declaring void th' unsanction'd marriage.

INA.

King!

I am a wife, and mother of a prince,
Who must not blush, in riper years, to hear
His mother's name.

BALDRED.

Dost thou, perverse and thankless,
Turn from the outstretch'd hand of royal mercy?
The law to death has doom'd thee. But the king
Would snatch thee from thy fate, and we, his council,
Applaud his deed; while thou, ungrateful woman!—

INA.

My lords, the sentence you declare as law
I cannot have incurr'd. The prince is free:

He is a man, and has the privilege
Ye none of you would yield, to choose his mate !
But if the claims of state demand my death,
I, for my country's weal, can lay my head,
Calmly as any of ye, on the block.
A death so glorious, by my countrymen
With grateful tears acknowledged, will not stain
The name of *her* who bore your future king.

BALDRED.

Consider well. Delay is not allow'd.
To-morrow, or the scaffold or the cloister !

INA (*with terror*).

And must I then, my lords, prepare for death ?
Nor see my husband—more ?

BALDRED.

Thou never wilt see him thou hast named thus,
Which e'er thou choose. [*Seeing her overcome.*

Think of that tender frame,
Moved thus by ills, as yet but faintly imaged !
Oh ! how will it sustain the real horrors
Of infamous and public execution ?
While the outrageous populace throng round thee
With curses loud, or haply, coarser pity ?
I marvel not to see thee shrink appall'd !
Yes, shroud thy timid softness in the cloister,

Where sister saints shall fold thee to their bosoms,
From the rough world and all its ills secure.

INA.

Mock not, my lord, what nature's various hand
Stamp't on the weaker sex to set off yours !
The finer texture of our nerves will thrill
At horrid sounds : the changeful cheek will blanch,
Though not with fear ; or glow with crimson hue,
Though not a thought less pure have stain'd the mind :
And, though I tremble, lords, nor can support me—
Nor can distinctly mark this awful presence
(For in amazement swims my troubled vision) ;
Yet does this frame, so fragile, bear a soul
More constant than ye think, where youthful pride
Both knows to *make* the choice which virtue prompts,
And by that choice *abide*. 'Tis death, my lords ;
Dishonour never !

BALDRED.

Thou wilt think otherwise ;
Thou art not firm to meet the law's full rigour.

INA.

Baldred, I am ! If what thou say'st be law :
I must live honour'd as Prince Egbert's wife,
Or must not live : and, when ye shed my blood,
Remember, 'tis Prince Egbert's wife ye murder.
May I retire, my liege, and wait my sentence ?

CENULPH.

Attend her hence, Lord Oswald. Ina, mark,
'Tis *thou* who hast rejected offer'd mercy. [*Exit* INA.
Alwyn, thou see'st how vain it is to strive
Against her firm resolve.

ALWYN.

Most firm, my liege,
In honour's mid-day course. I thought no less
Of one, though of the weaker sex, and gentlest
Ev'n of the gentle—sprung of *Sigiswold*!

BALDRED.

Alwyn would say, the father's loyalty
Sanctions the offspring's treason.

CENULPH (*to the lords, rising*).

In your hands
I leave my seal: affix it to the sentence
Your steadier judgment prompts. [*Exit*.

OSWALD.

Harsh the decree, howe'er expedient, lords;
And pregnant too with danger that ye mark not.
Prince Egbert holds the soldiers' hearts, and may
Be driven to extremes. Though justice doom her,
And the public safety, yet remorseful
Be the stroke; nor chains, nor loathsome dungeons
Add gloomier terrors to untimely fate!
Be her own house her only prison, lords;

And though ye place a trusty guard around it,
Let her not be control'd in aught, save what
Might furnish means to escape:—this mercy asks.

LORDS.

And justice yields.—No one objects to this.

BALDRED.

The impending danger, nay, the sure destruction
Of this ill-fated land, if we avert not
The sword of war, and this the only means,
Have been well weigh'd before. Alas! my friends,
The public danger suffers not delay.
The child must die with her, or nought is done.
Are we not all agreed?

ALWYN.

No. *I*, my lords!
I dare protest against the bloody sentence!

BALDRED.

Alwyn, beware! 'Tis well known thou hast been
Base pandar to Prince Egbert's worst excesses.
What by my holy office I declare
To be most just—most necessary—thou,
Bold as thou art, wilt thou, at thy life's hazard,
Vainly oppose? I do take shame, my lords,
That this man's taunts should thus have moved my
temper;
I who have thrown aside the ruthless sword

To bear the pastor's crook ! who did forego
The pride and pomp of war—the shout of triumph,
For humble beads, and the low voice of prayer !
Would *I*, my friends, would *I* have doom'd this lamb,
Pride of my flock ! but for the good of all ?

SECOND LORD.

None doubt your pious motives, holy Baldred.

BALDRED.

In the fair cause of peace, 'tis Heaven's decree.

ALWYN.

I tell thee, proud remorseless priest—*that* Heaven,
Thou would'st make 'complice of thy cruelty,
Will baffle thee. Yes—the red bolt of vengeance
Will find the guilty head beneath the cowl,
As surely as the bare and houseless ruffian's,
Who spoils the nightly traveller !—nor waits
The swifter fire till tardy thunders warn ! [Exit.

[The scene closes on them as they are signing her sentence.]

ACT V.—SCENE I.

Ina's Bower.

INA, OSRIC, and Guards.

INA.

My home! thou scene of happiness! my *home*!

(Oh! the sweet recollections in that word!)

For the last time my eyes would fain retrace

Each several spot so dear!—but blinding tears—

[Seeing the guards, and shuddering.]

These savage men! good Osric, pray dismiss them—

They gaze on me with bold, ungentle looks,

That wear not the respect methinks were due

To wretchedness like mine.

OSRIC (*makes signs they should retire*).

You are obey'd.

INA.

Is thy heart hard, that Baldred chooses *thee*

To be my jailer?

OSRIC.

Lady, I'm a soldier,
Command the troops that guard the royal person;
And while I hold this charge, were my own father
Entrusted to my keeping, I were firm.

INA.

And must the soldier know no touch of nature?

OSRIC.

I said not so. I meant but to declare
The soldier's honour must not shrink, although
His heart-strings burst.

INA.

Methinks, my lord
Did show thee favour once?

OSRIC.

'T was on an outpost.
Wounded, and left as dead, the tide of battle
Roll'd onwards where I lay.—The prince was there
(For he was every where, and ruled the fates),
He placed me on his steed, supported, led me,—
Himself deep wading through swoln Isis' flood,
And gave me to a cottager in charge—
Nay, thought of me in victory's madd'ning hour,
And sent, ere night, one skill'd to close my wounds.
Lady, if *hard* this heart, th' impression graved
On hardest things is deepest, and most durable!

INA.

Thou'rt moved!—kind soul!—my grief, not I, did wrong
thee.

Sure thou *couldst* pity me!

OSRIC.

Oh! might I prove it!

INA.

Thou may'st! for though thou canst not spare my life,
'Tis thine to soften death. Thou, by thy office,
Hast access ever to the royal presence.
Conduct me to the king.

OSRIC (*astonished*).

Ha! say'st thou?—wherefore?

INA.

I would but claim a grandsire's pitying care
For Egbert's—for thy benefactor's—child.
Then look on death with such meek constancy
As innocence may lend.

OSRIC.

Thou hast prevail'd.

But, lady, wait—I pray you wait a space
Till darker night close round, and the hush'd palace
Assure no interruption.—'Tis but life
I hazard here,—the soldier's *honour* safe!
For Alwyn said the king forbade control,
Save in what might afford thee means of freedom.

INA.

Thou generous man! thy precious life is sure;
The prince at hazard of his own will guard it.
But what of Alwyn? thou didst speak his name.

OSRIC (*giving her a dagger*).

He bade me give thee this; yet, charge thee, live
If it be possible——

INA (*taking it eagerly*).

I understand him.

[*After looking at it with emotion, she goes to a table
on which are emblems of worship.*]

Here I shall offer up my last sad prayer
When I return; and, if the secret voice
Of conscience speak assent, yes,—I will hug thee,
Horrible as thou art!—thou last best friend,
That canst alone prevent the headsman's stroke.

[*Lays the dagger on the table.*]

Here too I place my Egbert's pictured form,
It might offend. [Takes a picture from her breast.

And here, these gems, his tokens!

[*Places ornaments.*]

They ill become the wretched suppliant
To death devoted.——

(*Returning to OSRIC*). Alwyn, where is he?
I little thought that Alwyn would forsake me.

OSRIC.

Forsake thee? He! The cruel sentence pass'd,
He flung him on the steed prepared for thee;
And, with a madman's desperate course, he sped
To seek thy Egbert.

INA.

Oh! 'twas rashly done!
Had I but known his purpose, I had sent
Some words of comfort,—of fallacious hope.
Osric, my husband's bosom owns no thought
Mine does not share. We are one heart! one mind!
And the full tidings of my fate, pour'd forth
With careless haste, will kill him. Oh! I know,
Too well I know, alas! th' impetuous course
Of all his soul's affections!—

OSRIC.

Nay, take comfort.
Haply good Alwyn brings him to thy rescue.

INA.

The distance, Osric!—Will the wild winds lend
Their rushing wings?

OSRIC.

Forestall not evils, lady.
There's pity still in heaven!

INA (*looking out*).

See, my friend!

The last pale lingering light has left the west.

I will prepare me.

OSRIC.

I will wait you, lady.

[Exeunt severally.]

SCENE II.

A Wood. Night.

BALDRED and armed Peasants.

BALDRED.

A thoughtless groom that tends on Alwyn's steeds
Betray'd their course. They will pass through this wood !
Conceal yourselves, my friends, and be ye sure
The prince escape not. Egbert's death alone
Can save you from the sword of Ethelbald.
Think of your wives, your children, and your homes.
Hark ! I hear distant voices ! to your stand.

[They conceal themselves.]

Enter EGBERT and ALWYN.

EGBERT.

Oh Alwyn ! that my gallant steed should fail me !
In Ina's rescue fail me !—

ALWYN.

Ere he sunk

O'erwearied, he had measured half the realm!

My fleetest coursers wait in yonder hamlet,

Conceal'd by darkness and these tangled trees.

Trust me, my lord; I know each knotted oak,

Each bushy dell; and, though the moon refuse

Her friendly beam, can guide your steps aright.

[The peasants attack them. EGBERT wards off their weapons, but does not strike them.]

EGBERT.

Refrain these ruffian staves! hold, traitors! hold!

I am your prince—your leader—and for you

Have this day staked my blood on yonder plains.

Stand off! forbear! I would not take the lives

Of those for whom I fought beneath that sun,

Gone down erewhile in crimson blushes wrapt,

To hide him from your deed.

[The peasants fall back, and then advance again tumultuously.]

On your allegiance!

Ingratitude shames mercy from her softness!

[They fall back again.]

Mistaken men! what villain set you on?

Not of yourselves—ye men of Wessex!—no—

Not of yourselves,—my countrymen! my friends!
My fellow subjects!—and my fellow soldiers!
Would ye attempt my life. I know you would not!
I trust you ere ye speak. [*Peasants fall at his feet.*
(*Sheathing his sword*). Who set you on?

PEASANTS.

A holy man declared you held at nought
Our lives, our fortunes—and he bade us boldly
By one great stroke secure them.

EGBERT.

“Boldly,” fellow!

Is midnight murder *bold*? ye are abused—
'Tis at his *country's* foe the Briton strikes,
And thus secures the blessings ye have named.

PEASANTS.

Oh! pardon—generous prince! our lives are yours.

EGBERT (*raising them*).

Away, poor knaves, away! ye were misled.
I would not have the peering moon betray
Some well-known aspect, and unwilling force me
To do as justice points.—I pardon you—
Depart—nor let me see you till in battle
Ye on your country's foes redeem this deed.

[*As they are going off, BALDRED steals behind*

EGBERT *with uplifted weapon.*

ALWYN (*rushing on him, and seizing his arm*).

Ha! treacherous villain?—No! it cannot be
A British breast I pierce!—Die—traitor, die!

[*Stabs him.*

BALDRED (*falling*).

Detested Alwyn!—Is it thine—to wield—
The threaten'd—bolt—of vengeance!—

ALWYN.

Baldred's voice?

And didst thou wrap thee in the holy seeming
Of peace and love for this? for secret murder?

EGBERT.

Unhappy Baldred! how had I deserved
Thy deadly hate?

BALDRED.

As does the sun—himself—
The hate—of all—heaven's glittering—host beside,
And I—like them—would shun—thy hated—presence.
Wilt—wilt thou—still—embitter—death's last pang,
As thou hast poison'd—all—my course—of life.

EGBERT.

Yet live! oh live! accept my friendship, Baldred—
My forgiveness!—

BALDRED.

Forgiveness—from the man—I hate?
Ye demons! save me—from him—save—oh, save me!

[*Dies.*

ALWYN.

So may th' unerring vengeance of high Heaven
Still fall on those, who wrest the sacred cause
To their dark purposes!

EGBERT.

Oh, Ina! Ina!
Should this delay prove fatal!—On, my friend!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

*The King's Closet.*CENULPH (*alone*).

The midnight hour has toll'd! I fain would rest.
Sleep flies these aching eyes! Why is it so?

[*He ruminates in a disturbed manner.*]

It is not much that *one* be sacrificed
To stay the sword of war. Yet, ere I press
The downy couch, a painful something *here*,
I would compose by my accustom'd prayer.
I never yet have laid me down to rest,
Unoffer'd to high Heaven the past day's deeds.
Why do I seem less ready now to bend
The humble knee? If, for my people's weal,

This woman's death!—'tis well— *[He kneels.*

Yes, I will kneel.

I am alone with thee, my Maker! Thee!

In whose sight all are equal—all thy creatures.

[As he kneels down, INA enters softly behind with her child, approaches unperceived as he speaks, and kneels beside him.

INA.

No; I am with thee, in thy Maker's presence!

Like thee, his creature! and, if true thou say'st,

Thy equal in his sight.

CENULPH (*with terror*).

Protect me, Heaven!

Ha! is it past?—Avaunt! terrific vision!

Com'st thou to charge me with thy blood?

INA.

No, king!

I come to bow me at thy honour'd foot,

And plead for *thee*, that thou wilt spare thyself.

Oh! spare thy age, nor rob it of its staff,

The blameless conscience! Of its graceful honours,

Posterity! and children's children's blessings!

CENULPH.

Thou! thou dost bar me from the joys thou nam'st.

They will be mine when thou art in the grave.

How didst thou gain admittance at this hour?

Who aided thee in this?—his life shall pay——

INA.

'Twas *He*, to whom thou didst pour forth the prayer.
He gave to innocence unwonted courage,
And lent my suit the winning grace it needed.
He, whose voice heaves the sea, and stills the storm—
Bade every cruel passion to subside ;
And, as I pass'd, fashion'd each heart to pity.
The gentle hand, unconscious of its act,
Put back the pond'rous bolt!—With noiseless sweep
The portal open'd, to admit a mother
Bearing her orphan'd little one, to place him
Beneath a grandsire's care. [*Presenting the child.*

Protect this child !

The heir of Wessex' throne !

CENULPH.

I will not look on't.

Away, and take it hence!—It dies with thee.

INA.

Oh ! say not so ! Murder the rosy babe
That smiles on thee ? thy age's stay and hope !
Thou, who not yet in wantonness of power
Hast rioted in blood ! not yet hast mock'd
At nature's ties !—and at thy first essay
To crimson thy hard hand with this ! thy own !
Nay, tremble, tyrant ! tremble in thy turn
Before a frantic mother !—*Thou* a father !

Oh, yes! thou art, and father of a son,
Whose infancy was dear as is this babe's.

CENULPH.

Yes, dear his infancy! his boyhood dearer!
His youth my pride! my joy! till thy loose arts
Wound sensuality's soft silken toils
Around his soul.—Besotted in thy love,
What crimes may he not perpetrate to soothe
Thy woman's pride!—His father's throne—his life—
Nay, hang not on me—thou'rt my bane, my curse.
But thou art doom'd—of treasonous practices
Convicted publicly.—Prepare for death!

INA.

I *am* prepared to meet death as becomes me;
Although 'tis hard to die, so young, so loved!
Thy Egbert, too, will find it hard to part.

CENULPH.

Shall the young eagle mate him with the raven,
Nor, spurning the delusion, spring aloft,
Bathing his plumes in the meridian ray
To shake off foul pollution?—Think it not.

INA.

Nor think thou he can lose the wife he loves,
Nor feel a pang.

CENULPH.

'T will be forgotten soon.

INA.

And was the pang so soon forgot by thee,
To lose thy virtuous queen, my gracious mistress?
Though 'twas by nature's hand, matured for heaven
By a long life of happiness and love!
Not torn from thee, as must be Egbert's wife,
In spring of bliss, but gently summon'd hence.

CENULPH.

No more of this. Fair Edelfleda's charms,
With whom he weds——

INA.

Oh! never, never, king!
He will not long survive.—Thus Edelfleda
Will be appeased, and peace once more restored.
Then will this child—Oh, look on him, King Cenulph!
Then will this child remind thee of thy son.
Fear not to look:—he but resembles Egbert.—
He bears no feature of his wretched mother.
His looks will waken none but grateful thoughts
Of all that once was thine in Egbert's worth,
Nor e'er remind thee of the deed of blood
That stain'd thy long reign's close.

CENULPH.

I charge thee, hence!

Was't I who will'd thy death?

INA.

It was myself!

And I am firm to die with honour, rather
Than live with fame attainted. Sigiswold,
My father, died with honour.

CENULPH (*starting at the name*).

Sigiswold!

INA.

I am his daughter! and like him I die
For thee, and for thy people.—If his blood,
His faithful blood, that at thy feet flow'd forth,
While thronging subjects hail'd thy rescued life!
Have any claim upon a royal heart,
(But, haply, nursed in soft prosperity,
A king is not a man that he should pity!)
Oh! in my father's name—to thee—my father!
My Egbert's father, therefore mine, I sue.

CENULPH.

I'll hear no more—away! I have sworn thy death.

INA.

And I will die content—indeed I will,
If thou wilt hear thy victim's dying prayer.
Grant, grant, that I once more behold my husband!
Oh! let thy Egbert once more see his child!
And bless him, once, once more! Oh! let me see him,
And parting, speak as holy wedded love,

So rudely sever'd in its youthful prime,
May prompt. This last, this sad, this little comfort,
Canst thou refuse to her whose father saved thee?
A mother! and a wife! whose throbbing breast
Thy hand so soon will still for ever?

CENULPH (*groans*).

Oh!

INA.

Merciful God! thou dost wipe off a tear?
Spite of thyself thou hast a father's heart!

[*Eagerly pressing the child towards him.*

Look on thy Egbert's child, and let me hear,
Ere yet, at day-break, I lay down my life,
A grandsire's blessing pour'd upon his head!

[CENULPH *snatches the child to his bosom.* INA *contemplates them with rapture, then with trembling anxiety and hope.*

Father! and shall I see my Egbert too?

CENULPH.

Yes! thou shalt see him—nor for thousand worlds
Shalt thou be torn from him!

[*Embraces her and the child together, with agonizing emotion—then*.

Come, Ethelbald!

In all thy terrors, come! I am prepared—
I and my children will defy thy rage.

EDRED (*behind the scenes*).
Nay, let me pass. Ye shall not stay my steps.
Monarchs would wish their slumbers ever broken
By tidings such as these!

(*Entering*). King Cenulph! joy!
Th' invading host no longer threatens thee.
While they advanced in insolence and pride,
Dreaming of conquest—as the god of battles
Prince Egbert came!—with skill, his powers dividing,
He rush'd upon the foe from every side.
Disorder'd, broken, they but fell on death
Where'er they turn'd. 'Twas one wide slaughter all.
Our brooks run crimson to th' affrighted sea!
Our thirsty fallows drink of Mercian blood!
Countless the prisoners!—Ethelbald is taken!

Enter EDELFLEDA.

EDELFLEDA.
Egbert victorious!—Ethelbald in chains!
And is it true? and am I quite undone?
[*Seeing CENULPH embrace INA.*
What sight is this that blasts the blessed sense
Of vision? doom'd to death a few hours since,
Feeble old man, by thee and by thy council,
I see her now, clasp'd in thy trembling arms,
While tears of dotage o'er thy eye-balls swell.

Stand I alone in the wide world?—no power
That rules our fates to avenge or to protect me?
Then will I be protector to myself!
My own avenger!—independent—single—
Supreme!—though but in misery and guilt!

*[She rushes to stab INA. CENULPH seizes her arm,
and the attendants surround her.]*

CENULPH.

Guard her, Lord Oswald, with respectful care.—
This frantic act was but the effect of grief.

INA.

Soothe her, my lord. Who shall compassionate
Her soul's distracted state if Ina do not?
Oh! use not harsh constraint, lest she should feel
Too heavy on her heart her father's chains,
Her fortune's overthrow.

EDELFLADA.

This ruffian grasp!
And think ye, sirs, ye hold some lawless hind
By sordid rapine stain'd?—I am a princess!
A mighty monarch's daughter!—though dethroned—
And sacred still my person!—Nay, unhand me.

[They leave her.]

See, I am tranquil, king!—

(To INA). Nor tremble thou—

One moment I forgot myself—no more—

But to high Heaven belongs to judge the faults
Of royal souls!—the royal soul itself,
Heaven's best interpreter!—and royal hands
Alone shall execute Heaven's just decree!

[Stabs herself.]

INA.

Hold, hold her hand, Lord Oswald! 'tis too late!
What hast thou done?

EDELFLADA.

To Mercia's wretched princess
I have secured an honourable death!—
I could not live degraded!—thou or I—
Must yield!—'tis mine—I will'd it so!—and now—
(Which Edelfleda had not ask'd and lived)
Thy pardon, Ina!

INA.

Oh! much-injured princess!
Thou pardon rather the unworthy Ina
That happiness it now seems guilt to own!

EDELFLADA.

These torpid pulses, with—mad passion throb—
No longer—all—is calm—and cold—tell Egbert—
I—dying—bless'd—your loves!—I pray—you—both—
Think—kindly—sometimes—kindly—speak—of me—

CENULPH.

Oh! Edelfleda! rash, unhappy maid!

Thy hand has dash'd from thee exalted good ;
The good congenial to thy lofty spirit !
Seated on Mercia's throne, thy soul of love
Had in a people's bliss secured thy own.

EDELFLÉDA.

No, monarch—no ; there is—no bliss—for one—
Who—loving virtue, but—by passion—driven—
To worst—extremes—can never—never—more
Honour—herself.—Oh ! let—the quiet—grave—
Close o'er—my sorrows—and my—fault. That pang !—
And now—I rest—— [Dies.

INA.

Oh Heaven ! her soul is fled !

CENULPH.

Poor Edelfleda ! Summon her attendants !
Good Bertha, bear her hence ; apply each means
If yet a lingering breath of life——

EDRED.

My liege,
We fear some ill may have befallen Prince Egbert.

CENULPH.

Where is he ? Comes he not ?

EDRED.

There came a man,
With visor down—in breathless haste he came ;

They spoke apart with gestures violent,
And sudden sped together o'er the plain.

INA.

"Twas to his heart's dear home my Egbert sped!
He will be there ere we can reach it, father!

[*She rushes out, CENULPH follows.*]

SCENE IV.

Ina's House.

Enter EGBERT and ALWYN hastily.

EGBERT.

I am here, my love! they shall not tear thee from me!
Thy husband will defend thee from the world!
My love! my wife! where art thou?

ALWYN (*alarmed*).

My good lord,
Strange silence reigns around. They sleep, perhaps—
The menial train. The night is far advanced.
I pray you rest you here: I will awake them.
Haply thy Ina too enjoys repose—
For sleep will visit suffering innocence.

EGBERT.

Haste thee, my friend, and rouse the drowsy sluggards.

[*Exit* ALWYN.

(*Going to a door*). This is her chamber. Those loved
eyes have wept,

Till, as the infant's, they have closed in sleep.

I'll enter softly, and will whisper peace;

Till, by degrees, she wake to the full sense

Of all our joy. [*He enters, and returns.*

She is not there!—Nor wife!

Nor child is there! Nor Alice—all is still!

Where am I?—(*faltering*).

(*Starting*.) Ina!—Is it possible?

(*With violence*.) My love! my wife! my Ina!

Enter BLANCH.

EGBERT.

Where is thy mistress?

BLANCH.

Some hours have pass'd since she departed hence,

With Alice and her infant, good my lord.

EGBERT (*distracted*).

Say how? say whither?—Speak—be brief!

BLANCH.

My lord,

The guard and Osric waited on her steps ;
With locks dishevell'd, wrapt in sable weeds,
Weeping she went, alas ! we know not whither.

EGBERT.

Hush ! speak no more—thy every word is death !

[*Exit* BLANCH.

[*After a pause, in which he appears violently agitated.*

Am I still living ? Had we not one being ?
Beats still my heart ? and not responsive beats,
In each pulsation, throb for throb to hers ?

[*With revived hope.*

It cannot be : I yet shall find her——

[*Sees the table, with the dagger, picture, &c.*

What see I here ? Her holy book of prayer ?

A dagger placed beside it ! and my portrait,

That never had forsook her *living* bosom !

The tokens of my love too !—Tyrant father !

And ye, ye men of blood !

[*He weeps.*

She is with angels !

Yet still unblest without her Egbert ! Thus

She summons me, and gives the means—and thus,

Thus, my soul's love, thy husband follows thee.

[*Stabs himself.*

Enter ALWYN.

ALWYN.

She is gone forth; but yet I nothing doubt:
I with redoubled diligence will search—
We yet shall find her.

EGBERT.

I—shall—find her soon!

ALWYN.

Why, why, my friend, that ghastly aspect? why
Those tottering steps? What hast thou done?—A
poniard!

EGBERT.

I could not live—she beckon'd—from the skies—
I let my spirit—forth—that else—had burst—
With ruder shock—its prison.

ALWYN.

Mercy! Heaven!

INA (*behind the scenes*).

And is he come? Oh joy! Where—where is he?
My husband! Egbert!

(*Entering*). See—I live! I live!

[*He sinks into ALWYN's arms.*

He sinks! Too mighty the o'erwhelming joy!

Softly, good Alwyn—softly—place him *here*—

*[She helps to support him, and he rests his head
on her bosom.]*

A moment yet—his senses will return—

Let all be hush'd around.

[After a pause, in low tender accents.]

My love! my husband!

'Tis thy own Ina—We are happy, Egbert!

EGBERT (*reviving*).

Is death but this? Have I already past

The dreaded bourne? And does thy sainted spirit

Bend to receive me in the blest abodes?

How easy death!

INA.

Talk not of death—we live,

And we are blest beyond our fondest wish—

We are forgiven—The good Cenulph loves me,

Has clasp'd thy wife, thy infant to his bosom!

[A pause.]

A little moment, friends—his mind not yet

Can compass our immensity of bliss.

Ha! while I speak of joy thy cheek grows pale:

Methinks no gladness beams in those dear eyes.

Thou art very ill!—thy looks are wild and sad.

Come, father, come.

Enter CENULPH.

CENULPH.

My son! my victor son!

EGBERT.

My father too! Oh that I yet might live!

CENULPH.

What has befallen? Is not all well with thee?

My age's prop! My noble, valiant son!

INA (*screams*).

Here's blood!

EGBERT.

Oh! Ina—this rash—desperate—hand
Has dash'd—dash'd to the earth—our cup of joy.
'Tis here—'tis here—cold—cold—and I must die.
Have mercy, Heaven!—one—little hour—of life
Were worth—but 'twill not be—I'm sick—to death.

CENULPH.

Haste—seek—bring aid—my throne, my treasure, all,
All shall be his who first brings timely aid.

EGBERT.

'Tis vain, my father—Oh! the stroke—was—home—
Pardon—Oh! pardon—that I could—misjudge
A father's heart! My love—my wife—be patient—

Oh! father—bid her live—to warn—our child—
From—passion's—headlong—course.—

[*Stretches his hand to ALWYN.*

My friend!—Oh! Ina!

Where art thou?—I nor see—nor feel—I sink—

Hold fast—my hand!—My wife—my Ina—Oh!

[*Dies.*

She falls on the body, and the Curtain drops.

EPILOGUE,

BY

THOMAS MOORE, Esq.

LAST night, as lonely o'er my fire I sat,
Thinking of cues, starts, exits, and—all that;
And wondering much what little knavish sprite
Had put it first in women's heads to write;
Sudden I saw—as in some witching dream—
A bright blue Glory round my book-case beam;
From whose quick-opening folds of azure light,
Out flew a tiny Form, as small and bright
As Puck the Fairy, when he pops his head,
Some sunny morning, from a violet bed:
“Bless me!” (I starting, cried) “what Imp are you?”—
“A small He-devil, ma'am—my name, BAS BLEU—
“A bookish Sprite, much giv'n to routs and reading,—
“’Tis I who teach your spinster of high breeding
“The reigning taste in chemistry and caps,
“The last new bounds of tuckers and of maps;
“And, when the waltz has twirl'd her giddy brain,
“With metaphysics twirl it back again!”
I view'd him as he spoke—his hose were blue,
His wings—the covers of the last Review—
Cerulean, bordered with a jaundice hue,

And tinsell'd gaily o'er, for evening wear,
 Till the next quarter brings a new-fledged pair.
 " Inspired by me ! " (pursued this waggish Fairy)
 " That best of wives and Sapphos, Lady Mary,
 " Votary alike of Crispin and the Muse,
 " Makes her own splay-foot epigrams and shoes.
 " For *me* the eyes of young Camilla shine,
 " And mingle love's blue brilliancies with mine ;
 " For me she sits apart, from coxcombs shrinking,
 " Looks wise, the pretty soul ! and *thinks* she's thinking.
 " By my advice, Miss Indigo attends
 " Lectures on Memory, and assures her friends,
 " ' 'Pon honour ! (*mimicks*) nothing can surpass the plan
 " ' Of that Professor—(*trying to recollect*) psha !—that
 Memory-man,—
 " ' That—what's his name ?—him I attended lately—
 " ' Pon honour, he improved *my* memory greatly.' "—
 Here, courtseying low, I ask'd the blue-legg'd sprite
 What share he had in this our play to-night ?
 " Nay, *there*," he cried, " there I am guiltless quite ;
 " What ! choose a heroine from that Gothic time,
 " When no one waltz'd, and none but monks could rhyme :
 " When lovely Woman, all unschool'd and wild,
 " Blush'd without art, and without culture smiled ;
 " Simple as flowers, while yet *unclass'd* they shone,
 " Ere Science call'd their brilliant world her own,
 " Ranged the wild rosy things in learned orders,
 " And fill'd with Greek the garden's blushing borders !—
 " No—no—your gentle Inas will not do—

“ To-morrow evening, when the lights burn blue,
“ I’ll come—(*pointing downwards*) you understand—till
then, adieu !”

And *has* the Sprite been here?—no—jests apart—
Howe’er man rules in science and in art,
The sphere of woman’s glory is the heart ;
And, if *our* Muse have sketch’d, with pencil true,
The wife—the mother—firm, yet gentle too ;—
Whose soul, wrapp’d up in ties itself hath spun,
Trembles, if touch’d in the remotest one !—
Who loves,—yet dares ev’n Love himself disown,
When Honour’s broken shaft supports his throne ;—
If *such* our Ina, she may scorn the evils,
Dire as they are, of Critics, and—Blue Devils !

XARIFA,

A TRAGIC DRAMA.

ATLANTA

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

ABDALLAH, *king of Granada.*

MORAIZEL, *of the race of the Aben-Zurrahs, leader of the troops, and father of Xarifa.*

ALBIN HAMAD, *nephew to Moraizel, and betrothed to Xarifa.*

ALHAMUT, } *Moorish knights of the race of the Zegris,*
ALI, } *at enmity with the Aben-Zurrahs.*

DON JUAN DE CHACON, *the Spanish general.*

DON DIEGO.

XARIFA, *betrothed to Albin Hamad.*

ESPERANZA, *a Spanish slave, her attendant.*

Moorish and Spanish Soldiers, Guards, &c.

SCENE, *Granada, and the Spanish camp under the walls of the city.*

For the fable, see page 340, "*Historia de las Guerras de Granada.*"

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

Amador, a boy of Granada
Monsieur, of the rank of the French Academy, leader of
the troops, and father of Amador
Alfonso, a Spaniard, nephew to Monsiur, and betrothed to
Isabella
Alfonso, a Spaniard, brother of the rank of the Spanish
Army, in company with the Duke of Alba
Don Juan de Escobedo, the Spanish General
Don Diego

Ximenes, betrothed to Isabella
Fernando, a Spaniard, since his marriage

Alfonso and Spanish Nobles, Gentlemen, &c.

SCENE, Granada, and the Town as they appear in
the first Act

For the sake of the story, I thought it best to mention the
names of the persons who are to be seen in the drama

X A R I F A.

ACT I.—SCENE I.

Scene on the walls of the city overlooking the field of battle. On the distant hills is seen the Spanish camp. Moors pass hastily across the stage, and look anxiously over the walls on the combatants beneath. Two Moors come forward from the crowd.

FIRST MOOR.

THEY yield—they yield on all sides to the foe!

SECOND MOOR.

Their ranks are broke.

THIRD MOOR (*from the walls*).

Mark, yonder on the left

They make a stand.—

FOURTH MOOR (*on the walls*).

'Tis but to check the bands
Of fierce Castilians pressing on the rear.

And see! our friends along the valley pour
With breathless speed—

THIRD MOOR.

They throng the eastern gate!

FIRST MOOR.

Granada! oh my country! woe for thee!
Press'd by the foe without—within thy walls
Tumult and civil strife! The envious Zegriss!
They have fall'n off to blast Moraizel's fame,
The Aben-Zurrah chief who led them forth!

SECOND MOOR.

The chief is brave, but bends beneath his years:
Youth's fire is quench'd. Had Albin Hamad led
The morning's onset, it had not been thus.
He is alike of Aben-Zurrah lineage,
Nor envy prompts my speech.

FIRST MOOR.

True, he is nobly gifted: yet, methinks,
Of youth too green, too confident, too rash,
To hold a leader's charge; but I will haste
And meet our hapless friends, of them to learn
The worst that has befallen.

SECOND MOOR.

'Tis well advised.

And see—the beauteous daughter of Moraizel,
With hurried step, disorder'd, and her train

Of Moorish damsels, on the ramparts throng.

FIRST MOOR.

The clamorous grief of women is not music
To the dull ear of age. I will avoid them.

[Exeunt two Moors.]

[The train of women are looking anxiously over the battlements, with actions expressive of various emotions, while XARIFA, as if unable to bear the sight any longer, totters forward, supported by ESPERANZA.]

XARIFA.

Look, Esperanza, look:—survey the field—
Say, is the last sad remnant of our troops
Received within the gates?

ESPERANZA *(after looking over the walls, returns).*

Alas! dear mistress,
Few, few remain upon the fatal plain,
Save those who never more——

XARIFA *(hiding her eyes).*

Oh dreadful sight!

Confused through tears, the hill, the valley, all
To me appears one mingled mass of horror.
Yet look again—*thou* hast no father there!
See'st thou the milk-white steed, the crimson vest,
The lofty turban, ensign of command?

ESPERANZA (*looks again, and returns*).

Alas! no—nothing. But, perchance, Moraizel,
When treacherous fortune frown'd upon his arms,
With the first band return'd.

XARIFA (*indignant*).

Ha! Esperanza,
Speak'st thou of brave Moraizel?—of my father?

ESPERANZA.

Pardon, dear mistress; I would calm thy fears,
And weigh not well my words.

XARIFA (*kindly*).

Thy thought was kind;
Yet, Esperanza, know, although 'tis hard
To tremble for his life, 'twere not relief
To deem his glory tarnish'd.

ESPERANZA.

Yet be patient.

The valiant Albin Hamad will, ere long,
Bring tidings fraught with comfort. Well thou know'st
The band he leads this morning went not forth.
And is it not some joy to think that he,
The faithful youth, thy bosom's chosen lord,
Was spared a part in this disastrous day?

XARIFA.

Thy gentle cunning now has touch'd the theme
That best might soothe my cares. I thank thee, friend;

But Albin Hamad tarries long, methinks :

To-day his post was at the eastern gate.

ESPERANZA.

E'en while I look'd, the eastern gate was closed.

XARIFA.

Then is he free to come. Does he forget

How dear her father to Xarifa ?

ESPERANZA.

Nay,

Since the eastern gate was closed, an arrow's flight

Had scarce the distance measured—and behold,

Unjust Xarifa ! Albin Hamad comes.

HAMAD *enters, takes XARIFA'S hand, and appears unable to speak.*

HAMAD.

Xarifa ! oh !

XARIFA (*terrified*).

Thou canst not speak thy tidings !

HAMAD.

Our troops repulsed with loss——

XARIFA.

But say—my father!—

Speak!—how fares Moraizel ?

HAMAD (*clasping his hands*).

Good Moraizel !

XARIFA.

Have pity yet. Oh say not he is slain!

HAMAD.

No, dear Xarifa, no!—thy father lives!

XARIFA.

All powerful Heaven, thanks!—But yet methinks
Thy looks, thy tone of sadness, ill accord
With these glad tidings. Oh my fears! he is wounded?

HAMAD.

Not so.—The scars that grace the hoary chief
Bleed not afresh!

XARIFA.

Then all, methinks, were well,
If Hamad's brow but wore its wonted cheer;
And I to-morrow—so my father bade—
Should vow to Hamad all a wife's obedience.

HAMAD.

For us to-morrow is no day of joy.

XARIFA.

Ah! wherefore? wherefore?—Is it Hamad speaks?

HAMAD.

Could'st thou know joy, Moraizel far away?
Say, who but *he* can give Xarifa's hand?

XARIFA.

Nor slain! nor wounded! Yet these dreadful words!
Oh! worse than all!—a captive——

HAMAD.

Doom'd to chains
Those noble hands from youth to veteran age
Used but to wield the terror-flashing sabre,
Till now so fatal to Granada's foes!

XARIFA.

What! fasten chains on him?—Oh no, they durst not—
They durst not for their lives!—His eye, in anger,
Would dash their hardihood. His reverend head
Wears awe and strong control: no, their rude hands
Would slacken—but thou smil'st in tender pity.
Are they so hard?—have they no mercy?—none!
And will they tear the father from his child?

[After an agony of tears.]

Has filial love but unavailing tears
To give a father? Yes, it has—it has
A worthier boon! Farewell, my Albin Hamad!
Yes, I must follow in captivity
My honour'd father. From my infant years
I have been his heart's best joy! he told me so
But yesterday, and press'd me to his bosom.
His tears fell on my tresses as he spoke,
And then he thought but to have given me, Hamad,
To thee and happiness! 'Tis mine to follow,
And in the stranger's land to tend his age.
Nay, stay me not!

HAMAD (*detaining her*).

Thy looks and words how wild !
Think of the guarded walls that bar thy way !
Think of thy youth ! thy sex ! thy matchless beauty !
Thou would'st but rush on danger, or dishonour,
The sport, the mock of brutal, pitiless men !
Spurn'd haply by their chief ! the haughty Juan !

ESPERANZA.

Oh, speak not thus !—Born in Andalusia,
The blood my parents gave me swells my heart
To hear my generous countrymen so slander'd.
While I was yet a child in Carthagenia,
Don Juan was the universal theme
For deeds of courtesy no less than valour.

XARIFA.

Pardon, good Esperanza !

(*To HAMAD*). Yes, full oft
She has with tales of noble Juan's worth
Beguiled the heavy hour—and portray'd him
As one who own'd, beneath a soldier's sternness,
The kindest feelings : e'en so gently temper'd,
That when war's clarion ceased to rend the air,
His ear would drink the lute's soft mingled sounds,
Till he was lost in pleasing ecstasy ;
And he would lend his fancy to the tale

Of fabled woe, till from his ardent eye
Big tears would follow each disastrous chance.

ESPERANZA.

Oft have I seen it! Oh that he were here!
And young, and pitiful as then!

XARIFA.

Ha! "pitiful!"

Was that thy word? and "would that he were here,"
Said'st thou?—Thou thinkest then Xarifa's plaint
Might touch in noble Juan's heart the string
Would answer to the lute, were she to plead
As filial love should prompt?

ESPERANZA.

My life upon it!

XARIFA (*with enthusiasm*).

Thanks, Esperanza, thanks! Dear Hamad, come!
Honour and knighthood shall protect and guard
The suppliant and the woman! Come, away!
Yes, I will throw me at the victor's feet,
Prone in the dust, and clinging to his knees,
Will claim my father with an orphan's cry!

HAMAD.

Thou art inspired! Thy ardent eye, thy words
Burn with a fire the prophet's self has lent!
My soul has caught thy hope! all fear is fled!
Thy promised husband, I attend thy steps.

Let us go forth——

[During this speech the King, ALHAMUT, and attendants, appear on the battlements. As HAMAD is leading XARIFA off he sees them.]

Ha! yonder walks the king,
With looks disturb'd! I would avoid his eye.
My love, why didst thou stray so near the tower
Whence 'tis his custom to survey the plain?

XARIFA.

Led on by anxious fears, and step by step——
But whither shall we turn? The king has mark'd us!
See—he approaches! Let us stand apart.

The KING advances in conversation with ALHAMUT.

KING.

The flower of my warlike bands mow'd down;
Moraizel taken, say'st thou?

ALHAMUT (*with affected sorrow*).

Even so!

Yet gallantly, my liege, your troops bore on,
Till their brave leader lost, their order broken——

KING.

No more!—For this we must not to the foe
Present a heavy brow, and hang the head;
But with to-morrow's sun, in prouder cheer,
Pour from the gates, and bear ourselves in all

As men who follow up late victory.

(Observing HAMAD and XARIFA avoiding him).

Young Albin Hamad—is it not? Draw near—

Yet nearer—— *[Takes him aside, watching XARIFA.*

Noble youth, who is yon fair one
Who from my presence would withdraw close-veil'd?

HAMAD.

My liege, she is the daughter of Moraizel,
And weeps her father's fate.

KING.

Tell her the king
Partakes her grief. Conduct her hither, Hamad.
(Aside). Fame speaks her passing fair; 'tis haply, there-
fore,

Secluded from my sight, her father ever
Would find some specious reason——

[HAMAD leads her forward, veiled.

Gentle mourner,
Teach me how best to soothe thy virtuous sorrow;
But first, I pray, remove thy folding veil,
That I may read thy story in thy eyes,
And sympathize ere thou canst speak thy pain.

[She meekly unveils; the KING starts.

Ha! Fame has wrong'd thee much, bright excellence!

XARIFA.

Give me thy royal sanction, great Abdallah!

That I go forth and seek the Spanish chief;
Bow'd at his feet redeem my captive father,
Or follow him, and share his chains.

KING.

Nay, rather stay where never chains shall bind
Those graceful limbs, save such as Love may weave
Of thornless roses, and unfading myrtle :
Thou art too fair to meet the lawless gaze
Of mail-clad ruffians. By Mahomet, methinks,
Should the bold winds too rudely kiss that cheek,
Or flutter on those lips with fond delay,
They were my envy!

XARIFA.

King! these flattering words
Distasteful strike on misery's sicken'd sense.
I do entreat your royal nobleness,
Let my soul's honest purpose but have way :
A secret voice within my bosom whispers
Assurance of success.

KING.

To dry those tears
My coffers shall be tax'd for boundless ransom!

XARIFA.

Pardon, my liege ; methinks that proffer'd gold
Were held offence to knighthood.

KING.

Yet be cheer'd,

A monarch's suit shall soothe the Spaniard's pride!

A monarch's awe strike off thy father's chains!

XARIFA.

The orphan's prayer will oft times more prevail

O'er sterner tempers than a monarch's awe.

Fierceness itself in lions, and in wolves,

Has pitying stoop'd to infant innocence;

And haughtiest spirits put not on defence

When lowliness assails.

KING.

There is no spirit

So savage, or so brutal, could resist

Thy sweet persuasion! Reason sinks abash'd,

Robb'd of her argument, and wisest deems

Whate'er wild fancy counsels by thy voice.

Then be it as thou wilt:—but come thyself,

And bring thy rescued father to my presence;

From *thy* hand only will his king receive him.

(*To HAMAD*). Tend her, brave Hamad, as a sacred trust

Committed by Abdallah to thy faith.

HAMAD (*indignant*).

Moraizel's daughter is a charge so precious

To Hamad's faith, not *thou* canst make it more so!

KING (*indignant*).

Ha! heard I well? was it a subject spoke?

XARIFA (*anxiously interposing*).

From childhood he has honour'd—loved my father.
Great king! his eager thought is gone before;
And for the Spaniard's ear that firmer tone—

KING.

'Tis well, sweet maid! since *thou* wilt have it so.

XARIFA.

Thanks, gracious king! Permit me to retire.

[*As she goes with HAMAD and ESPERANZA, he gazes after her.*]

KING.

And must it be?—so soon?—Alhamut, mark
Her graceful carriage!—Sure she treads in air,
And draws the willing spirit from my bosom
To float the way she leads. I never yet
Beheld the form so robb'd me of myself.

ALHAMUT.

The maid is fair, I grant.—Yet think, my liege,
How many fairer share your smiles already.
The gentle Miriam! Shall another rival
Dim her dark eyes with tears? Circassia's maid!
Whose bosom scarce has ceased to heave with sighs
For her lost country, and the home she loved.
The blue-eyed Christian damsel, so demure,
Who with her faith so prettily waged war
In Love's victorious cause!

KING (*not attending to him*).

Did'st thou speak her name?

ALHAMUT (*with suppressed vexation*).

They call the maid

Who parted hence, Xarifa.

(*Aside*). Blast her charms!

His soul is fired!

KING (*thoughtful*).

Young Hamad—is't not so?—

Is kinsman to the maid.—How near of blood,

That she should be “so precious to his faith?”

ALHAMUT.

He was bequeathed an infant to Moraizel

By a loved sister, twice ten winters since

In sack'd Cardela lost; and with his daughter,

The orphan youth has shared a father's care.

KING.

'Tis well.—How gracefully she shrunk, abash'd,

From my too ardent gaze! What hidden power

Lurk'd in her meek deportment, so to o'erawe

My sovereign will that would have stay'd her steps,

Yet fear'd to offend? I have heard of potent spells,

Of fascination strange, ta'en by the eyes,

That fetters fast each limb, locks up all use

Of wholesome judgment.

ALHAMUT.

Yes—I have heard it said—
The prophet's foes know to compel foul spirits
By charms, and magic, and unholy things,
Unto their service.

KING.

What would'st thou infer?
Why dost thou measure me with anxious looks
And broken speech? Give utterance to thy thought.

ALHAMUT.

The Christian slave, who waited on Xarifa,
Is much suspected to have won her youth
From the pure Moslem faith to rites abhorr'd;
And it should seem, my liege, to see you thus——
Let not my loyalty and love offend!
Might I presume to urge a timely counsel,
Admit her not again.

KING.

Peace, slanderer, peace!
We know the enmity you Zegri knights
Bear to Moraizel, and the Aben-Zurrahs.
Now, by my faith, the maid should rather seem
Graced by the prophet's self with gifts so rare,
The chosen houri of his blissful hours,
Than faithless to his worship. Ha! thou smil'st,
And bit'st thy lip the while.—Leave me, Alhamut;

(*Aside.*) Must a king ever be surrounded thus
By prying eyes, officious, that would scan
His inmost thought?

[*Going, ALHAMUT follows humbly; the KING waves him off.*

I would not be attended. [*Exit.*

[*ALHAMUT remains confounded—to him ALI.*

ALI.

Alhamut, thou art disturbed. Hast thou not heard
The proud Moraizel's ta'en?—our hated foe,
Abdallah's favour'd chief.

ALHAMUT (*impatiently*).

I know it all.

ALI.

Oh! 'twas well done!—Our faithful Zegris mark'd
The chief o'erpower'd by numbers, yet delay'd——

ALHAMUT.

Tush! what avails it?—Even now his daughter—
Perdition seize her charms!—with tears and sighs——

ALI.

Well may she weep her sire and fortunes lost!

ALHAMUT.

We, we have cause to weep. Abdallah saw her:
I mark'd the subtle fire that sudden stole
Through all his frame. The slave of lawless passion!
Yet skill'd to bend each adverse circumstance,
By deepest art to work his soul's dark purpose,

That so his tyrannous will may wear the semblance
Of strong necessity!—Was't not enough
The Aben-Zurrah chief should lead the battle,
While in the scabbard slept perforce our sabres,
Forbid to dim the lustre of his deeds;
But now his daughter with her blandishments
Shall trick defeat in triumph's wreaths, and bring him
To claim a victor's meed?—We are undone.
With frowns the king forbade my due attendance.
Displeased he parted hence.

ALI.

Our hopes are blasted.
What! of the Aben-Zurrah race, shall *she*,
She—curses on her!—rule Abdallah's breast,
And lord it o'er us?—No—it shall not be!

ALHAMUT.

It shall not be—brave Ali, we have said it—
No, perish first the Zegriss man by man! [Exeunt.

ACT II.—SCENE I.

The Spanish Camp.

DON JUAN, DIEGO, *and Spanish troops.* MORAIZEL *and Moorish prisoners.*

JUAN.

How fare our wounded friends?

DIEGO.

Their gashes bound,
In eager thought, already, noble Juan,
Beneath thy banners they renew the fight.

JUAN.

Lead on the prisoners. [*The prisoners pass in review.*]

So! prepare an escort

To guide them to th' interior of Castile.

Come hither, Diego. [Takes DIEGO apart.

He, the Moorish chief,

Our noble captive, let his reverend age
Claim due observance. Said'st thou not, he is
Of Aben-zurrah lineage?

DIEGO.

True, my lord.

But why thus moved?

JUAN.

The very name, good Diego,
Awakens recollections twice ten years
Have not yet lull'd. My loved, my lost Daraxa!
It was her boast the Aben-zurrah's blood
Enrich'd her veins!

DIEGO.

Daraxa!—So you call'd
A Moorish maid, the choicest spoil you bore
From sack'd Cardela's walls.

JUAN.

We loved, Diego,
And seal'd by holy ties our mutual vows.
Spain's sovereign claim'd my service on the sudden.
My cruel father, in my absence, wrought
To annul the bond with one of Moslem faith.
She could not brook dishonour!—fled, and, dying,
Consign'd the pledge of our unhappy loves
To one—'twas all I e'er could learn—who swore
To rear the boy in my Daraxa's faith:
Or who, or where, nor if he live, I know not.
Ha! who are these? and this low bending train
Veil'd from my view?

HAMAD, XARIFA, and a train of Moorish damsels, enter from the back of the stage while he is speaking, and throw themselves at JUAN'S feet.

HAMAD AND XARIFA.

Mercy, victorious Juan! Mercy, Christian!

XARIFA (*on seeing her father, starts up and runs to him*).

My father! my dear father!

MORAIZEL.

Xarifa! Oh, my child! Why art thou here
In hostile camps? Why from thy peaceful home?

XARIFA.

The daughter's home is by her parent's side.

[*Throwing herself on his bosom.*]

Now—now, my father, is thy child at home!

MORAIZEL.

Quit the defenceless bosom of a captive!

Why would'st thou rob me of a soldier's firmness?

Return—return!

XARIFA.

Never without my father!

MORAIZEL.

Nay, loose thy tender grasp!

(*To JUAN*). As thou art brave,

Give her safe convoy to the city's walls.
I am prepared to meet my fate. The arm
That could no longer guard this aged head,
Is justly doom'd to wield no more the sabre.
Farewell, my child!—Lead on.

XARIFA (*at JUAN'S feet*).

Victorious chief!

Never was valour link'd with cruelty :
The generous foe conquers to spare ; for victory,
Not slaughter, thirsts his spirit ; and sweet mercy,
The glorious labour o'er, claims all his soul !

JUAN.

Yet victory may bear foul slaughter's name,
If wisdom fail to profit by her gifts.

XARIFA.

Wisdom and Mercy still go hand in hand.
Wisdom is not so stern to bar thy ear
Against the orphan's prayer ; and Mercy ever
Showers her own gifts on those whom she has school'd :
Then give a father to a daughter's tears !

JUAN.

Trust me, fair Moor, I pity thy distress ;
But shall the leader of the Christians, leagued
To war against the infidels, release
The captured chief who led th' embattled foe ?
Thou mock'st me, lovely maid ;—it must not be.

XARIFA.

Oh then, deny me not to follow him!
Bold as he is, and dreadful in the fight,
See, he is bent with years—his locks are silver'd!
Sickness not yet impairs his veteran strength,
But now, methinks, will find the access easy
To one heart-stricken. Then let me be near!
These hands can best prepare the cooling draught,
Or bind the aching brow. [JUAN *turns away*.

Turn, noble Juan!

Hast thou no little ones, whose lisped love
Has taught thy heart how dear the tie that binds
The father and his child?

JUAN.

Sweet pleader, no;
To all domestic ties—long—long a stranger.

XARIFA.

Owens not thy bosom one dear bond of nature
May wake thy sympathy for private sorrow?

JUAN (*with a heavy sigh*).

Not one. I am but a soldier.

[*As she presses towards him, observing his emotion,
he turns from her.*

Nay, fair maid!

XARIFA.

No, not the unbending brow, the haughty carriage

Stern war must needs assume, can still the voice
Of nature in thy breast. Thou *hast* a heart!
Oh yes! it beats in secret for my pain!
I have no other parent, noble Juan,
And twice am orphan'd if thou tear him from me.

[*As JUAN strives to get from her, HAMAD rushes forward.*]

HAMAD.

Behold, hard Spaniard, one in youth's full prime,
The promised husband of this maid! These limbs,
These suppler limbs, in all their pith and strength,
Shall wear her father's chains—But give Moraizel,
Oh give him to her tears!

JUAN.

Shall I be baited?
Though knighthood doff the helm to suppliant beauty,
To thee, bold youth, I am the Spanish chief!

XARIFA (*hanging on HAMAD'S arm, while he and
JUAN fix each other*).

And would'st thou leave me, Hamad? this thy love?

HAMAD.

Proud victor, yes!—to thee, the Spanish chief,
Boldly I say, accept my hardier youth.

JUAN (*aside*).

He has a look that powerfully pleads.

XARIFA (*to JUAN*).

Oh! spare my husband! Say, shall I be widow'd
Ere yet the vow be breathed that makes me his?
Brave Juan, hadst thou known the tie that binds
Two faithful hearts, thou would'st not sever us.

JUAN (*aside*).

Oh memory! I thought the chords were snapt
That vibrate *here* to agony!

MORAIZEL (*interposing*).

No more!

Return, my children, with a father's blessing.

XARIFA.

No, no, my father, never will I quit thee.

MORAIZEL.

And wilt thou, faithless, rather leave thy husband?

XARIFA.

Faithless to Hamad?—No, may Heaven's bolt
Fall on my perjured head, if e'er in thought,
In word, or deed, I wrong my chosen lord,
The husband thou, my father, bad'st me love!

MORAIZEL (*joining their hands*).

Hamad, lead hence thy wife.

HAMAD.

Moraizel, thou

Lead hence thy daughter.

JUAN (*who has watched HAMAD during this debate*).

It should seem, methinks,
That I have met his ardent eye ere now.
But where?—'tis as a dream.

HAMAD (*earnestly to JUAN*).

See, at thy feet
I ask Moraizel's chains.

XARIFA (*in the same supplicating attitude by his side*).

The faithful wife
Follows her husband's fortunes. So the father
His daughter's duty points.

MORAIZEL.

And would my children on my white head heap
Such wretchedness? bereft of all I love,
To drain the dregs of age's tasteless cup!
Such foul dishonour, as to hold these days,
So few, so sad,—I will not say of *life*,—
At such a price!—am I so poor of soul?
To nature recreant? the shame of knighthood?
I blush, brave Juan, at this idle strife:
Lead on—lead on.

JUAN (*aside, after a conflict*).

No, not for worlds by *me*
Shall their young loves be torn asunder.

(*To XARIFA*). Rise!

Rise, lovely maid! I am not, as ye think,

Of stuff impenetrable, noble Moors!
Used but to scenes of blood, this gentler war
Of loving hearts makes Victory dash the wreath
From her vain brow, and deem her honours poor.

(Presenting MORAIZEL to XARIFA).

Lady, receive thy father. Still a captive,
Be thou his only jailer. Thou forbid
That he against us lead Granada's troops.

XARIFA.

How poor are words to speak my bursting soul!

MORAIZEL.

Oh generous! great!—believe an old man's tears!

JUAN *(to HAMAD)*.

Thou, noble youth, art free. We claim no slaves
Save those in battle taken. No restraint
Can I impose, with justice, on thy valour:
Yet let me pray thee, husband of Xarifa,
Avoid Don Juan in the bloody strife.
The time may come when war, as 'twere a beast
Of prey o'ergorged, may sleep, and then I would
That we might meet as friends.

HAMAD.

Thus bound to thee,
Heaven's swiftest lightning sure would blast this arm,
Were it upraised against thy godlike breast!

Xarifa's benefactor! mine! and *his*,
My more than father! *his*, who rear'd my youth
From orphan'd infancy!

JUAN (*starting*).

An orphan!

(*Aside, mastering his emotion*). Sure
'Tis weak compassion moves me thus—no more.

(*Resuming tranquillity*).

Depart, brave veteran. Lovely maid, farewell!

(*To the attendants*).

Give them safe convoy to the city's walls.

[MORAIZEL, HAMAD, XARIFA, and train move off in
procession. JUAN follows HAMAD with his eyes.

Why of his fortunes did I not inquire?

Oh! thou tormentor, Hope! must I still listen

To thy suggestions, idle, vain, delusive?

[*Exeunt Spaniards on the other side, JUAN thoughtful. Scene closes.*

SCENE II.

Royal Apartments in the Alhambra.

The KING with GALEFO, and proper attendants.

KING (*thoughtful and disturbed*).

Fool that I was to grant her suit! and yet
'Twere shame to knighthood and to public faith
Should he detain the maid. The haughty Juan
Was ever noble.

(*To an attendant*). Hast thou o'erlook'd the plain?
Saw'st thou the youth and lovely maid returning?
Leads she her rescued father?

ATTENDANT.

No, my liege,
I nothing saw when last——

KING.

Peace, fool!—Galefo,
Haste to the eastern turret. Yon dull clod
Nor sees nor hears aright. Thy eye is keen,
Glance o'er the plain;—return with lightning's speed.

[GALEFO goes. *The KING is again thoughtful.*
'Twere idle to suppose the Spanish chief

Would such a prize release.—No—no! and he,
Moraizel, may assert a father's right.
Yet a fond father would not doom his child
To sad captivity. She will return—
I yet shall see her.

GALEFO *enters.*

Ha! thou smil'st, Galefo!

GALEFO.

They come, my liege, they come! within the walls,
E'en now, the joyous troop approach th' Alhambra:
They lead Moraizel.

KING.

Thanks, Galefo, thanks.

Thou see'st my joy to greet the rescued chief.
(*Aside*). She comes! victorious fair! My spirits all
Rush with tumultuous throbbings to my breast,
That scarce I can find utterance.—'Tis she!

*Enter MORAIZEL, XARIFA, Moorish damsels, &c. in a
festive and triumphant train. MORAIZEL kneels to the
KING.*

MORAIZEL.

Lo! at your feet, my sov'reign lord, behold
Your faithful subject! from the Spaniard's bonds
By filial tenderness redeem'd.

KING.

Most welcome!

Rise, valiant chief! thy monarch holds thee dear
For thy own worth, and for thy peerless daughter's.

(Turning to XARIFA).

Say, how may we, fair excellence, repay
Our own particular debt, to hold again
The honour'd veteran we lamented lost?

XARIFA.

I am too well repaid, my gracious liege;
No thanks are mine—'twas Hamad's prayer prevail'd.

MORAIZEL.

'Tis thine, my child, by duteous tenderness,
Still to repay tenfold the generous deed.
Long promised to the noble youth, my liege,
I had appointed to bestow, to-morrow,
My daughter on his faith.

KING *(much agitated)*.

Bestow thy daughter?

Said'st thou long promised? She—the fair Xarifa?
I knew not this.—Moraizel, thou art secret!

MORAIZEL.

The humble fate of old Moraizel's child,
Methinks, were not of moment to arrest
The royal thought.

KING.

The fate of one so fair,
And of a race so noble, well might claim
A monarch's watchful care—nor can we sanction
That thou unworthily should'st match the maid.

MORAIZEL (*with respectful firmness*).

My word is given. Hamad well deserves her.

KING.

Hamad deserve her?—Ha! what mighty deed
Has yet graced Hamad's arms? A thousand swords
Of proof, by Hamad's single valour wrested
From thousand Spaniards' grasp, would warrant ill
So high an aim!

MORAIZEL (*more firmly*).

My liege, she is my daughter.

KING.

She is my subject! and thou shalt not doom
To low obscurity, to household cares,
A maid whose charms might fire a monarch's breast.

MORAIZEL.

Ha! "shall not!" Heard I well?

KING.

Dost thou reply?

Let Hamad first by deeds of arms deserve
Abdallah's favour, and Xarifa's hand!

Meantime this jewel of Granada's crown
Within the Alhambra palace shall be lodged.
Start not, old man. Thy daughter shall be honour'd,
Thou hast my royal word.

MORAIZEL (*bows with suppressed indignation, and
then aside with agitation*).

He durst not—no—

I will be calm.—

[XARIFA presses close to him.

My child!

XARIFA (*with inquiring looks*).

Speak—speak, my father!

MORAIZEL.

Xarifa! Oh! I cannot speak my thoughts!

XARIFA.

I read them all in this parental tear.

This trembling grasp that holds me to thy bosom,
Each speaks a several blessing!

MORAIZEL.

That my blessings
Might as a guardian host——

KING (*interrupting them*).

Sweet excellence!

Retire, I pray, where these thy slaves will tend thee.
Let every knee bend to the fair Xarifa.

Read in her eyes her will, and all obey!

XARIFA (*terrified, and clinging to her father*).

Oh! leave me not, my father!

KING.

Stay, Moraizel!

(*To XARIFA*). Fear nothing thou.—

(*To MORAIZEL*). Nay, I command thee stay.

[XARIFA *is led out*.]

Why dost thou frown, and mark with grudging eye
The honours on thy daughter's worth conferr'd?

MORAIZEL.

My liege, I have been silent, for I fear'd
To wake in her pure thought the least suspicion
Of what her father dreads.

KING (*with levity*).

And dost thou dread
A king should think her fair?

MORAIZEL.

I do, my liege.

KING.

Know then we love her! that we have resolved
To snatch her from the fate, the abject fate,
To which her father dooms her matchless charms.
Nay, smooth thy brow—she must, she shall be mine.
Why thus disturb'd, Moraizel? Moorish maids

Account it fame to win a monarch's love!

What should'st thou fear?

MORAIZEL.

True, what should I fear?

Thou canst but ease me of my weight of years.

Behold this faithful bosom! here strike home!

For till thy hand has still'd life's last pulsation,

Thou shalt not, king, dishonour old Moraizel!

And have I shed for thee in glory's field

More blood than frolics in thy wanton veins,

To be rewarded thus?

KING.

Old man, take heed.

As yet thy daughter's graces stand between

Thee and Abdallah's wrath!

MORAIZEL (*clasping his hands with passionate tenderness*).

My bosom's pride!

My virtuous child! Rear'd in such innocence

That she pass'd on, nor read the fell intent

Thy eye's wild flash proclaim'd!

KING.

Peace, dotard, peace!

MORAIZEL.

Hast thou forgot the race of which she springs?

The Aben-Zurrahs will avenge her wrongs.

KING (*starts, and appears disturbed*).

The Aben-Zurrahs! Ha! too oft they have shook
Granada's throne; and now, its best support!—
At such a time as this!—It must not be.

Where was my better judgment? This sweet frenzy
Possess'd my soul with such resistless sway,
I lost all thought but to obtain the maid.

[*After a pause of thought, while MORAIZEL appears
wrapt in grief.*

My queen! my wife!—Yes, she would grace a throne.

(*To MORAIZEL*).

I will forget thy warmth. Thou didst mistake
Our purpose, good Moraizel. Is a diadem
So poor a gift?

MORAIZEL.

I understand you not.

KING.

The lovely maid shall be Abdallah's queen.

MORAIZEL.

May I believe your words, my gracious liege?
Have I so much misjudged my sov'reign's thought?

KING.

Anger will hoodwink judgment! Yes, my friend,
Xarifa's noble birth, and spotless fame,
As to thyself are to Abdallah sacred.

MORAIZEL.

Yet still, my liege, I crave a patient hearing.
Young Hamad has my word. By my consent,
Their interchange of vows, and mutual faith.

KING.

I will deal nobly with him. Summon him.

[*Exit* MORAIZEL.]

The youth is of high mettle. I will touch him
That he shall sue for danger as a boon.
Nor shall he vainly sue! I will confer it
As most especial favour.

Re-enter MORAIZEL *with* HAMAD.

Gallant Hamad!

Brave youth, approach! Think not I doubt thy worth,
Yet are Xarifa's charms of higher price
Than good Moraizel deems. It were not well
That she, so excellent, so fair, so virtuous,
Were thine, ere thou hast proved in fight that valour
We all believe thou own'st. It were not well
That slander on Moraizel's choice should glance,
And say his age misplaced the precious gem
Would grace a monarch's crown.

HAMAD.

My gracious liege!

Your words are just! Oh put me to the proof!
Yet let me sue—by love's impatience sue—
That I, not later than to-morrow, vindicate
My valour on the foe. In this dear cause,
All tasks were light save such as ask delay.

KING.

One sun for thee shall, in its circling course,
Include a life of glory. The proud task
Not without danger, that shall stamp thy fame;
But glory, well thou know'st, on danger waits.
The blood that mantles in thy cheek assents,
While on thy brow sits crested honour throned!
Yes, thou wilt justify Moraizel's choice!

HAMAD.

Or leave my life upon the bloody plain!

KING.

Know, with ourself in equal poize we hold thee,
In Fortune's adverse scales. We are thy rival!
We love Xarifa! on Granada's throne,
Would place her matchless virtues.

HAMAD (*aside, thunderstruck*).

Help me, Heaven!

KING.

Our will were absolute! yet as man to man,
Thy king says—"Win her, Hamad, she is thine."
So wilt thou doubtless. Yet we rule not, youth,

The shifting fates, and if thou win her not,
As frankly yield her thou!

HAMAD.

What say'st thou? Yield her?
Yield my Xarifa?—Never but with life!
Abdallah, no! Thou bad'st me win the maid.
Methinks a thousand scorpions nestle here
Till I go forth. See there be danger, king,
To shame proud knighthood's blazon'd feats till now,
Or the light task might but disgrace the prize.

KING.

Thy speech is big: no doubt thy deeds will match it.
Thy kinsman band of valiant Aben-Zurrahs
Beneath the sacred standard thou shalt lead.
Thou know'st the law! Beneath that holy ensign,
To turn aside before the world in arms,
Incurs dishonour! and to lose it—death!

HAMAD.

Thanks, thanks, my gracious liege! A band of knights,
Though unmatch'd, few, against the Spanish host
Flush'd by late victory! the enterprise
Is worthy of the blood we boast. To-morrow
Victorious Hamad claims Xarifa's hand!

KING.

Go, noble youth! summon th' intrepid band—
Go forth ere dawn—the word be “Love and Glory.”—

So the young eagle springs into the sky
To meet the eye of day, with lusty wing
Winnowing the chequer'd clouds, then, poised a space
Firm in mid air, stoops on the careless quarry
Ere from his plumes he shake the dews of night.

[MORAIZEL and HAMAD speak apart. MORAIZEL
appearing to encourage, and dismiss him
kindly.

How easy 'tis to urge fond, headlong, youth
To self destruction! As a noxious reptile,
That chanced to cross my path, I might have crush'd
him,
Or whisper'd some dark Zegri in the ear,
"Hamad obstructs my way!" But were it wise
To buy Xarifa's hate? or live to feel
Th' accomplice Zegri tyrant of his lord?
More skilful—nay, more *honest*, sure, to say,
"Thou art my bane—kind youth, remove thyself."

[Having dismissed HAMAD, MORAIZEL rejoins
the KING.

Moraizel, art thou satisfied?

MORAIZEL.

My liege,
The task, methinks, o'ermatches Hamad's youth.

KING.

Brave Hamad thinks not so.—Art thou content,

If Hamad win her not, thy peerless daughter
Grace King Abdallah's throne?

MORAIZEL.

To glory dead,
Of abject soul, I were, if such high honours
I could unmoved contemplate. Yet, my liege,
The youth has claims upon my love:—to-day
He would have worn my bonds.

KING (*impatient*).

No more! no more!—
The Prophet will decide our claims, old man.
Go thou and calm thy daughter's fears. Ere long,
Abdallah at her feet will tell his love.

[*Exit.*

MORAIZEL (*alone*).

My daughter on Granada's throne! The Zegrís,
Their proud crests fall'n! 'Twere glorious!—But her
tears!

The gallant Hamad's worth! My honour pledged!—
Though pure, and gentle, is she not a woman?
Splendour, and power, and greatness in the *queen*
Will dry the *maiden's* tears, as mid-day suns
Disperse the dews of morning.—“Hamad's worth!”
Xarifa shall reward it from the throne.—
“My honour pledged!” *I* nought infringe my word:
'Tis the king rules, not I.—*I* needs must yield.

Abdallah nobly said, " Let Hamad win her !"
And wisely, " The Prophet will decide our claims."
Shall *I* pluck from my daughter's brow the diadem,
If Mahomet decree to place it there ?

[*Exit.*

ACT III.—SCENE I.

The Plain before the Walls of the City.

Spaniards in great numbers are driven back by the Aben-Zurrah knights. After the skirmish, two straggling Spaniards meet on the stage.

FIRST SPANIARD.

What is our veteran band o'erthrown alike?
This is most strange and fearful!

SECOND SPANIARD.

Dost thou wonder?

Roused from their slumbers ere the dawn of day!
Sore from late hard-earn'd victory, our soldiers
Marshall'd in haste, scarce arm'd——

FIRST SPANIARD.

Good Heaven befriend us!

A band of madmen sure this Moorish troop.
I never saw such desperation rage.
Didst mark their headlong leader?—One would say
He, in youth's proud conceit, had ta'en the burthen
Of the long war that wastes alike both states
On his gay shoulders—confident to end

The strife at once!—But mark!—with eagle flight
He stoops this way.—I'll not encounter him. [*Exeunt.*

[*Routed Spaniards again cross the stage. HAMAD
remains with the Moorish knights and the sacred
standard.*

HAMAD.

Is the day ours, completely ours, my friends?

And am I blest beyond all mortal thought?

FIRST MOORISH KNIGHT.

We have not met Don Juan in the field;

The sun is not yet high; although dispersed,

The foe may rally. Juan not o'ercome,

I cannot hold the victory ours. [*To HAMAD.*

Hast thou

Encounter'd him?

HAMAD.

Not I! the Gods be praised!

SECOND MOORISH KNIGHT.

Were it not Hamad's voice, those tones, methinks,

Might argue fear.

HAMAD.

Ha! fear?—Hadst thou not wrought

Such wonders for my sake——

SECOND MOORISH KNIGHT.

Nay, thou wast moved.

HAMAD (*recollecting himself*).

I was, good kinsman; and if *that* be fear,
It *was* with fear—to do a deed of baseness
Would darken this bright day.

SECOND MOORISH KNIGHT (*aside to the first*).

What mean his words?
And mark his alter'd brow!

THIRD MOORISH KNIGHT.

Look yonder, friends!
A troop in gallant cheer advancing!

FIRST MOORISH KNIGHT.

They come!
The flower of Spain!—Don Juan at their head!
Now, Hamad, will the day indeed be ours!

SECOND MOORISH KNIGHT.

In firm array the sacred standard circle!
Nay, Albin Hamad, 'tis no time for thought.

HAMAD (*with effort*).

True, true, brave knights, my kinsmen, and my fellows!
Victory or death!—since it must needs be so!

SECOND MOORISH KNIGHT.

Sure his voice dies away!—Is he o'erspent?

FIRST MOORISH KNIGHT.

It were no wonder:—he, like us, is human,
And has done more than squares with human powers.
See, they approach.

HAMAD (*with great effort*).

Charge—charge! “for love and glory!”

Enter JUAN and his troop.

JUAN.

Stand, Moor! who as the ravening wolf hast leapt
The fold, concealed by thievish night!

HAMAD.

Don Juan!

JUAN (*astonished*).

Husband of Xarifa!

HAMAD (*with desperation*).

Nay, come on—come on!

JUAN.

Why dost thou seek thy fate?

HAMAD.

I am victorious!

A victor, or a corse, must I return!

JUAN.

Neither—neither, youth. (*To his soldiers*). My friends,
forbear,

And stand apart.

[*Soldiers retire.*

HAMAD (*aside*).

Delay not!—lest I think——

JUAN.

Hamad, Don Juan would not take thy life.

HAMAD (*with passion*).

Would thou hadst ta'en it when I knelt before thee!
Then had my soul escaped Hell's foulest stain,
Ingratitude!—for now in mortal fight
'Tis mine to meet thee:—*thee!*—my benefactor!
Yes, noble Juan!—lift the godlike hand
That raised me from the earth!—Defend thyself!

JUAN.

Nay, turn aside.

HAMAD.

That would incur dishonour!
No—I must on!—Xarifa's hand the prize!

JUAN.

Vain were the thought again beneath yon standard
To seek your homes—Spain claims it of our swords!
The price were great were Hamad's life the forfeit.

HAMAD.

Yet, noble Juan, while life's current warms
This guilty breast, thou shalt not grasp yon standard.

[*Lifting his sword, then dropping his arm, and
turning away.*]

Oh! every way undone! If by my sabre
My benefactor fall, I live the victim
Of dark remorse! a terror to myself!
But fame, and fair Xarifa, both are mine!
Nor shall Abdallah tear her from my arms.

(*With renewed desperation*).

Come on! for in this thought a demon rages
Would raise my hand against a brother's breast.

JUAN.

Ha! would Abdallah tear your loves asunder?
Live, Hamad, live! to rescue thy Xarifa
From splendid wretchedness!—Avoid my sword!

HAMAD.

Let me fall rather by thy generous hand,
And scape such guilt! such ills! in glorious death.
Come on, nor fear to strike.

JUAN.

I will not, Hamad.

This is thy first assay!—Methinks it were
As one should heave the pond'rous axe to crop
The flowers of spring, were I to lift my sword
(Temper'd by a long course of hardihood)
Against thy youth's fair promise.

HAMAD.

Haughty Spaniard!

Disdains thy pride to meet my youth in fight,
And shall I live thus shamed?—Insulted honour!
Stifle all weak regards, and nerve this arm,
This arm he scorns, to reach his vaunting soul!
Thou, who to Xarifa gav'st her father—
Whose galling *pity* (it should seem) refused

To bind these limbs, their every swelling sinew
Is braced to thy destruction !

JUAN.

Think what thou dost !

Think of Xarifa !

HAMAD.

Yes!—'tis she I lose,
And am dishonour'd!—by thyself despised
If I but think of what I do!—Come on!
This to thy heart!

*[They fight—HAMAD with wild desperation, JUAN
on the defensive, with skill and caution.]*

Thou mock'st me still, proud Spaniard!
Thou ward'st off my point!—Nay, take my life,
Or yield the day.

JUAN.

Don Juan never yielded :
That is thy part.

HAMAD.

And lose Xarifa!—Hell!

*[They fight again; JUAN disarms HAMAD. In the
mean time the Moors are overpowered, and the
standard taken.]*

JUAN.

Thanks! thanks! kind Heaven! (*He raises HAMAD.*)
Hamad, take thy sword,

And deem it not disgrace, that one grown grey
Beneath war's iron harness—valiant youth!
Though not more brave than thou, should prove more
practised
In the cool swordsman's skill.

HAMAD.

Too noble foe!

Ah! guilty thus!—thus lost to happiness!
The life thou didst disdain to take—this hand——
(*Attempts to fall on his sword*).

JUAN.

Hold, frantic boy!—Ye noble Moors, his friends,
Watch o'er him, save him from his rash despair.

(*To HAMAD*).

Recall thy better thoughts. Be free—return—
Xarifa's husband—rescue her thou lov'st!

[*To the Moors, gazing on HAMAD with admiration
as he goes off.*]

He is a gem in knighthood's coronal!
To King Abdallah say, if many such
His walls pour forth, our sturdiest knights must gird
Their blades of proof to the encounter. Yes,
This Moor would honour the best blood of Spain!
His foe thus speaks his worth! Sirs, lead him hence.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE II.

XARIFA'S *Apartments in the Alhambra.*

ABDALLA, XARIFA *avoiding him.*

KING.

Why dost thou fly me? stay, beloved Xarifa!
Have greatness, honours, power, no charm for thee?

XARIFA.

My thoughts are humble, and in lowliness
Content to dwell with him my father chose.
Hamad, my liege, will prove invincible!
He fights for his Xarifa!

KING (*fixing her with significant looks*).

Should he fail?

XARIFA.

'Twas confidence in Heaven's mercy led me
To seek my father at the victor's feet!
'Twere impious then to doubt that Heaven's mercy
Protects my innocence, and Hamad's virtues.
E'en now my husband—my victorious husband,
Is haply at the gates! [*Going, he interrupts her.*]

KING.

Patience, sweet maid:

Ere long we shall have tidings.

(*Aside*). Her resistance
Provokes the fire that rages in my bosom.
My senses palled by slaves who woo my smiles,
What keen delight to tame this graceful pride!
To banish from that radiant brow those frowns!

XARIFA.

Hark! hark! what sounds are those?—My trembling
heart,
Is this thy confidence? One comes, and bears
My fate.

Enter a MESSENGER breathless with haste, introduced by

ESPERANZA.

MESSENGER.

My liege, the noblest victory!

KING (*betraying his disappointment*).

Ha! victory?

XARIFA (*exultingly*).

Yes, victory! Victory to Hamad!

MESSENGER.

The noblest victory that human valour
Ere yet achieved! but in a moment snatch'd
From Hamad's brow! The sacred standard taken—

KING (*eagerly*).

And Hamad slain?

MESSENGER.

Don Juan's self, my liege,
After fierce conflict, man to man, disarm'd him.

KING.

Lives Hamad then?

MESSENGER.

He does:—but were he not
By friends surrounded, who restrain his hand,
A thousand times he had the dagger plunged
Deep in his desperate heart.

KING.

Enough!—retire.

(*Aside*). 'Tis well—'tis well—the sacred standard lost.

[XARIFA *faints*.

Look to the lovely maid!—The female train,
Where linger they? [*Her attendants rush in.*

Support her head—she sinks—
Soft—lead her in!—Nay, give her to my arms!

[*He supports and contemplates her.*

She on my bosom rests!—Reclining thus,
Thus unresisting clasp'd, unconsciousness
A moment wears the semblance of consent.
Her fluttering heart beats faster—half unclosed
Her eyelids seek the light. That heavy sigh!
'Twas Heaven's own breath!—but was it not for
Hamad?

XARIFA (*reviving*).

Hamad!—my husband!

KING.

Thou art with one who loves thee!
Loves thee with ardour such as subjects know not.
Who at thy feet would lay an empire's crown!
Beauties from every clime—thy rivals once—
Low bending in thy train!

XARIFA (*struggling, and getting from him to*
ESPERANZA).

The king!—Oh horror!

Save me!—save me!

KING.

Save thee from whom?—Abdallah
Were thy best friend, would'st thou but have him so.

XARIFA.

Thou! thou my friend! who sent my Hamad forth?

KING.

Nay, Hamad sued for danger as a boon,
Mock'd the slight task that asked but human powers.
Th' aspiring youth has highest aims!—would snatch
With one bold grasp all Fame can give!—His meed,
All that the prophet promises of bliss
To long-tried warrior saints!—Am I to blame
That Hamad was presumptuous?

XARIFA.

Thankless king!

Thou should'st have slaves, that to the dust abased
Shrink from thy banners while they kiss thy feet—
Not noble knights thy subjects!—loyal, true,
Of matchless valour!

KING.

Ha! Moraizel's daughter!

Fair as thou art, presume not thou too far!
It had been deem'd *forbearance* in a *king*
To let *one* live, so long, who barr'd the way
To what his soul desired; but I, more generous,
Bade Hamad win thee by fair deeds of arms.
'Tis this same "matchless valour," as thou call'st it,
More justly term'd presumption!—arrogance!
Blots from the roll of chivalry his name!
Forfeits his monarch's favour—and thy love!

XARIFA.

Oh never, never, king! In lowest fortunes
Dear to this heart as though the proudest throne
Of all the world were his!—Nay, dearer far!
For now 'tis mine alone to make him blest.
Then let us go for ever from thy sight
In poverty—disgrace—with all thy hate!
So we but go together, pathless wilds
Shall nothing lack of home! of home's best joys!

The breath of Fame is worthless to the brave
If it but wait on Fortune!—Scornful king!
I will so honour him, he shall not miss
Or *thine*! or the applause of multitudes!
Love has a thousand shifts thou little think'st
To steal away each care!

KING.

Dost thou insult me
With bold avowal of thy shameless passion?
Know Hamad's life is forfeit to the law,
The sacred standard taken!—Dost thou tremble?
[She sinks at his feet.]
Ha! haughty fair one! dost thou sink abash'd?
Who shall resist the law?

XARIFA.

Thou, king!—thyself!
'Tis thine to pardon!—Heaven's own privilege!

KING.

Not even kings may, on each slight pretence,
Sport with the laws.

XARIFA.

Is there no hope of mercy?

KING.

Hamad must die!

XARIFA (*rising*).

Say too Xarifa—tyrant!

KING.

No, *thou* must live!—live honour'd, fear'd, and loved!

XARIFA.

And hast thou *power* to bid the wretched live?
Canst *thou* allay the pang that gnaws the heart?
Or blot out memory's strong and faithful transcript?
Herbs, by the peasant's thrifty hand distill'd,
Can slack the fever's rage—but not *thy* frown
Arrest one pulse-throb hurrying life away.
Despair will mock thee from her hollow eye,
And with her last sad feeble laugh, elude thee
In Death's kind arms!—The godlike power thou hast
Thou wilt not use,—and that thou would'st assume,
Heaven gives not even to kings!

KING (*with passion*).

But thou, fair maid!

Thou hast each power thou nam'st.—Oh yes! 'tis thine
To rescue from the law its victim!—thine
To bid the wretched live!—to still each pang!
Arrest the fever warring *here* with life!
And teach Despair to lose herself in joy!

XARIFA (*shuddering*).

How may this be? What mean thy eager looks?

KING.

Adored Xarifa! Yes, brave Hamad's chains

Fall at thy bidding!—Pardon, royal favour
Await him at thy word! Say—shall he live?

XARIFA.

I tremble while I say—he shall!—for there—
There—in thy eyes—I read—I know not what
Of cruel triumph—of strange—horrible joy!
Yet—will I say—he shall!—if with *me* rest
The power to save:—for can ingenious malice
Inflict, or *dream* the torments and the racks
I would not welcome, and esteem delights?—

KING.

Talk not of racks and torments. Force shall never
Oppose in aught thy will!—save Love's soft force,
That would constrain thy sweetness to be blest,
In blessing him who cannot live without thee!
Away with idle tales of constancy
To vows extorted from simplicity,
Unknowing of its worth! [Seizing her hand.

XARIFA.

Loose me, Abdallah!

'Twas *Death* I welcomed, though beneath the rack,
Not *life*—with *thee* to live!—and bought by perfidy
To Hamad! Nay, by perfidy alike
To thee thyself!—were I to vow thee love,
And hate thee while I swore!

KING.

Hate!—said'st thou hate?
Beware, ungrateful woman! lest thou rouse
The hand of power—of sov'reign power—to vengeance!
Yes, there are deaths more frightful than thou dreamest!
They wait upon my nod!—To which of these
Think'st thou that nod shall doom thy minion—Hamad?

XARIFA (*frantic with terror*).

His life!—his life!—'tis all I ask—Be mine
Death in each frightful form——

KING.

Thou hold'st his fate!
For him on thy next word hang lingering tortures,
Multiplied, various, keeping death at bay!
One moment yet is given thee to relent.
Say, wilt thou be my wife?

XARIFA (*after a pause of agony*).

Impossible!

KING.

Xarifa has doom'd Hamad's death!—Ho! guards,
To instant execution—— [Guards enter.

XARIFA (*clinging to him*).

Tyrant—hold!

Or let me die with him.

KING.

No, thou shouldst live,

If 'twere but to revenge me of thy slights.

[She embraces his knees in speechless agony. He contemplates her in her abject posture with savage joy, then relenting,

Yet such my weakness still—I blush to own it—

I, for thy beauty's sake, could pardon him,

So thou would'st be more kind!

XARIFA.

Oh let him live!

Let Hamad live!—Heaven will dispose the rest.

KING.

Thou know'st the terms!

XARIFA.

Let Hamad live!—Xarifa

Will be—will be—— *(Aside, turning from him.*

Oh yes! will soon be—nothing!

KING.

Will be Abdallah's wife! Granada's queen!

XARIFA *(aside)*.

Death cannot tarry long! within my bosom

I feel his icy grasp.

KING.

Turn, fair Xarifa!

Turn thy averted eyes, that I may gaze,

And take in draughts of bliss too heavenly sweet

For the weak sense!—Thy willing hand in pledge!

XARIFA (*trembling and faltering, gives her hand*).

Swear—swear Hamad shall live!

KING.

He shall!—he shall!

The vow that makes thee mine once seal'd, I swear,
Hamad is free!—thyself with royal favour
Shalt grace his worth! Then clear thy brow! let smiles
Play round those lips again, as sportive beams
Dance on the dimpling ripple of the shore,
That all my soul may yield to thy soft sway,
And snatch a foretaste of the prophet's heaven!

[*To the guards.*

Let every minaret throughout Granada,
By the muezzin's voice, proclaim my bliss!
Prepare the nuptial rites! adorn the mosque!

[*Taking her hand and leading her off in a state of
insensibility.*

Come on, my fair! my love! my wife! my queen!

ACT IV.—SCENE I.

The Mosque, magnificently illuminated. A splendid marriage procession. XARIFA, supported by Moorish ladies, seems scarcely able to advance. When the procession has entered the Mosque, ALHAMUT and ALI remain.

ALHAMUT.

I will not to the Mosque ; nor wilt thou, Ali,
If on thy brow I read thy thought aright.

ALI.

No, truly ; why should we be there, to cringe
Before the Aben-zurrah's haughty daughter,
Who from the giddy throne prepares to frown
Annihilation on the Zegri race ?

ALHAMUT.

With what deep art Moraizel long conceal'd
The serpent in his bosom hatch'd to sting us !

ALI.

Yes, feigning still his daughter was betrothed
To Albin Hamad. But when time is ripe,

The youth is sent where sure destruction waits;
And now, condemn'd to death, the trusting fool——

ALHAMUT.

No, Ali, no! the Aben-zurrah's daughter,
Ere yet the crown was on her brow, had tasted
The sweets of sovereignty. O'erturn'd at will
Granada's laws! extended royal pardon,
Condemn'd—protected—with the practised grace
Of long accustom'd sway.

ALI.

What mean thy words?

ALHAMUT.

The royal nuptials solemnized, I bear
The mandate for young Hamad's liberation.
And see this scroll! these magic words have power
To topple from her height this meteor queen.

ALI (*reads*).

“*If thou would'st rescue her thou lov'st, repair*

“*With speed of thought to the Alhambra gardens.*

“*A Mute will loiter near the orange grove,*

“*And point the secret way.*”—How may this work?

ALHAMUT.

This by a faithful hand to Hamad given!—
He loves!—is bold—nor will suspect the snare.
My office gives me access to the gardens—
Dost thou not guess the rest? Love's twilight hour!
The gardens sacred to the queen!

ALI.

Enough.

Mad jealousy, in fierce Abdallah's breast,
Will colour high the picture to our wish.

ALHAMUT.

Come on, my friend!

ALI.

I will not quit thy side,
But share each danger that may free the Zegris
From the detested Aben-zurrah's sway.

[*They go.*]

SCENE II.

HAMAD chained in a dungeon.

How short were years of ill, sure, palpable,
To hours of this suspense!—Oh! my Xarifa!
Did I say *mine*?—*Mine* never, never more
Till hideous Death unite us!—Death, whose hand
Must dash the roses from that cheek! deface
What all fond nature's care but once could form
Of fair! of lovely!—steal the melting lustre
From those dear eyes!—for ever seal those lips,
Cold, pale, and motionless!—Hold! ruthless power!
And is it thus thou wilt present my bride——

Enter ESPERANZA.

ESPERANZA.

My lord!

HAMAD.

Kind Esperanza!—Speak—Oh speak!
And yet I dread to hear!—Is my Xarifa——

ESPERANZA.

From her I come. She bids thee be of comfort.
She bids thee live!—*live* if thou hold'st *her* dear,
Yet fly Granada's walls.

HAMAD (*pointing to his chains*).

Can I obey?

ESPERANZA.

Hamad, thou can'st. Ev'n now thy chains will fall,
And, free as nature made thee, thou may'st range
The wide world o'er in liberty and peace.

HAMAD.

Is Hamad fetter'd by no chains but these?
What hand shall loose the bonds of strong affection
In childhood woven—closer knit by time?
What giant arm shall from this bosom heave
The load dishonour heaps?—Impel the spirit
With renovated spring to range the world?
To me—the desert world—Xarifa lost!
Disgraced—condemn'd—I cannot—will not fly!

ESPERANZA.

Not so. Restored to fame, to royal favour,
E'en now the officers of state attend
To loose thy chains.—They must not find me here.

HAMAD.

A moment stay, thou niggard of thy speech!
Oh, when the finest chord of all that make
The bosom's harmony is snapt asunder,
The touch of joy but wakes harsh dissonance.
Then with one word attune my soul, and say—
Say—she still loves!

ESPERANZA.

Too well she proves her love!
No farther ask—But *live*!—She thus commands—
And fly!—Oh fly! [Exit.

HAMAD.

Restored to fame and honour!
Xarifa true!—Yet that I fly enjoin'd!

*Enter ALHAMUT and Officers of State, &c. They loose
HAMAD's chains, and ALHAMUT presents him his
sword.*

ALHAMUT.

'Tis King Abdallah's will that Albin Hamad,
The flower of Moorish knights, receive his sword,

And live, renown'd for deeds of martial prowess,
Which forced applause from the astonish'd foe.

HAMAD.

Oh, let me at my monarch's feet——

(*Aside, checking himself*). But no—
He loved her—Gods! what dreadful thought has flash'd
Athwart my madd'ning brain?—Away—away,
Dastard suspicion! No—he spoke me fair.

(*To ALHAMUT, &c.*)

Thanks, my good friends, thanks for your courtesy:
I pray you leave me. [*They go.*

Peace, tumultuous thoughts!

[*A Mute lingers behind, and puts the scroll into*

HAMAD'S hand—he reads it eagerly.

She bids me rescue her!—Now all is clear—
Thy words of mystery, good Esperanza,
Were love's own language!—Yes, she bids me *live*,
And *live for her*!—She bids me fly these walls,
But *with her* fly! *with her* in native freedom
Range the wide world in liberty and peace!

[*Exit.*

SCENE III.

The Alhambra Gardens. XARIFA in bridal robes, surrounded by a train of Moorish ladies. She is seated, and appears insensible to every thing around her.

FIRST LADY.

The queen revives! the flower-perfumed airs,
And rich delights th' Alhambra gardens yield,
Are grateful to her senses.—Royal mistress,
Accept our homage!

[They crowd around to do her homage; she turns away, shuddering.]

SECOND LADY.

How may we best obey our sovereign lord
In duteous service to Granada's queen?

[They present offerings; she looks wild and distressed, and waves them off.]

FIRST LADY.

Will not your majesty regard your slaves?

SECOND LADY.

The queen rejects our services, methinks.

[ESPERANZA enters at the back of the stage, and comes forward fearfully.]

ESPERANZA.

My queen!—my mistress!—speak.

[As she draws near more tenderly.

My friend!—Xarifa!

[XARIFA starts on hearing her name pronounced tenderly, recognizes ESPERANZA, and falls on her neck in a flood of tears.

FIRST LADY.

Shall none but she, the Spanish slave, find favour?

SECOND LADY.

We yet may be revenged of these proud slights.

ESPERANZA.

Ladies, I pray withdraw awhile. The queen
Will meet ere long with smiles your gentle cares.

[They withdraw.

We are alone! 'Tis Esperanza!

XARIFA.

Lives he?

ESPERANZA.

He does.

XARIFA.

And free?

ESPERANZA.

Released from chains,

Blest in his monarch's favour——

XARIFA *(starting and shuddering)*.

Blest!—Ha!—blest!—

ESPERANZA.

Would'st thou not have him so?

XARIFA.

It was for *that*

I gladly would have died!—and have done more.
Have done what makes grim Death look lovely fair,
That I would fondly woo his cold embrace,
Change for his pure white shroud these bridal robes,
And lay me in his earthy bed for ever!
Oh yes! I would have Hamad blest!—and yet
'Tis hard to think *him happy*—and *I—thus!*
Hadst thou but said *content!*—Oh no, 'twere poor
By so much woe to purchase but *content*
To him I love!—— [*Starting with horror.*

Ha! “love!”—It is a crime

To speak that word!—A faithless wife already!

ESPERANZA.

Remember that he lives!—that Hamad lives!

Forget all else——

XARIFA.

“Forget!”—Thou hast not loved!

Or if thou hast, he whom thy heart had chosen
Forsook thee——

ESPERANZA.

No—he died.

XARIFA (*taking her hand with kind compunction*).

Poor Esperanza!

Yet not like me, undone ; for thou art free
To weep his loss !—Alas ! thou art most happy !
I must not even think of Hamad's worth—
Must nothing feel of all that seem'd life's functions,—
And yet *must* live !—The viewless air, if tainted,
The worthless reptile with its puny sting,
Can still this motion we call *life* !—and can
Nor madden'd brain, nor broken heart arrest
These stubborn beatings forcing on existence ?

[She feels her heart and her temples, as if distracted.]

HAMAD (*behind the scenes*).

Xarifa !—My Xarifa !

ESPERANZA.

Hark ! methought
Among yon clustering shrubs a voice—It breathed
Your name !—All gracious Heaven ! who have we here ?

HAMAD (*rushing in*).

My love ! my wife !—Oh, this repays all, all,
To see thee once again, and clasp thee thus !

[She sinks into his arms in speechless transport.]

XARIFA.

My Hamad ! Can it be ?—Art thou restored ?
Safe, and unharm'd ? Thy looks speak nought but joy !

*[After gazing at him, she takes ESPERANZA aside,
and looking wildly and anxiously in her face.]*

Was't all a frightful dream ?—Assure my senses.

[*ESPERANZA smiles mournfully, and she looks around and recollects herself.*

Oh! no, no, no!—These fatal scenes!—too true!—
Irrevocably true!—

[*Returning to HAMAD with terror.*

How camest thou here?

Oh fly! for ever fly!—'Tis well with me
If thou but fly, for now I know thou liv'st,
The power that pent my parting spirit in
For this dear hour—this last—last—sad farewell,
Will gently loose my bonds, that my wing'd soul
May seek the skies, and this forgotten form
Mingle with dust!—

HAMAD.

Forgotten!—thou—forgotten—
Mingled with dust!—Thy words, thy looks affright me.

XARIFA.

Already dead to thee.

HAMAD.

Ha! faithless! perjured!
Dazzled by splendor, has ambition tainted
Thy once pure bosom?—No—it cannot be—
Thou still art mine!—Come, let us fly, my love!

XARIFA.

Hold, Hamad, hold!—I never can be thine!

HAMAD.

Proud, cold Xarifa! does thy heart throw off

One Fortune has disown'd?—I fondly hoped
That King Abdallah's generous acquittal——

XARIFA.

Generous! say'st thou?—Hamad, know'st thou not
The cruel price? Behold these fatal robes!
These trappings of despair! and guess the rest.

HAMAD.

I will not tremble—No, I know thy truth!
I gave not back thy faith—thy father *will* not,
Cannot resume his gift—Thou art my wife!

XARIFA (*as he looks anxiously in her face waiting
her answer, after an agony*).

I am—most miserable!—Leave me—leave me!
Thou liv'st!—Ere long *all* will be well!

HAMAD.

I live!

And live *for thee!* or *will* not live.

XARIFA.

Hamad!

The choice was mine to link thy name with death,
Or mine with wretchedness!—Thou see'st *me* wretched!

HAMAD.

Not yet—the fatal vow—thou art not yet——

XARIFA.

I am—another's!—but not long to be so.
There's something *here* assures me 'tis not long.

HAMAD.

No, not a moment longer!—We will fly!

XARIFA.

I never learnt to fly from duty's voice,
Till now so sweet! and still to be obey'd
However stern!—'Tis mine to stay—and die!
But fly! thou, once so loved, and still so dear,
Fly!—Seek thou happiness in other climes,
And tell thy heart thou seek'st it for Xarifa!
'Twill e'en be so!—Thy happiness will make
Her *only* joy, though in the realms of bliss!

HAMAD.

Cruel! In vain thou calmly bid'st me live.

XARIFA.

Would Hamad see Xarifa thus undone,
And rob her of the meed?

HAMAD.

Am I a stock?

A thing insensible to pain?—We are *one*!
From infancy are *one*!—Our earliest sports,
Our opening minds, our fellowship of thought,
Our first affections, sorrows, hopes, and fears,
All, all, were *one*!—Without thee I am nothing——

[*He weeps.*]

I do not bid *thée* live!—*I* better know
How much we are *one*!—Then let me die, Xarifa,
Or be thou mine!—spite of the whole world, *mine*!

XARIFA.

Thy grief has robb'd thee of thy better self,
That thou should'st urge *her*, so respected once,
Unworthily to act. Yet is it well,
That thus, awakening slumbering conscience,
Thou warn me to preserve us both from crime.
The honour of my blood—my father's name—
The memory of my virtuous mother—all—
Rise in array against mad passion's dictates.
I am a wife! and in those holy bonds
Unstain'd will die!—I am a queen!—the throne
Is as the sun—the cloud that dims his lustre
Darkens the world beneath!—Then from the throne
Virtue's pure beams shall flow, and Moorish dames
In virtue's cause shall learn of me to suffer.

HAMAD.

Where shall I hide me? worthless as I am!
Thus at thy feet, bright matchless excellence——

XARIFA.

Rise, rise—in pity——

ALHAMUT, ALI, and Janisaries rush in.

ALHAMUT.

Traitor!—tenfold traitor!

Is this thy gratitude to great Abdallah?

XARIFA.

Oh! hear me—hear me!—He is innocent.

Hold, merciless——

ALHAMUT.

Nay, bind him fast—Come on—

Now to the king.

[In the struggle HAMAD drops the scroll.]

HAMAD.

Farewell! beloved Xarifa!

Yes, death is sure!—Nor will the guilt be mine

To disobey thy will.—Farewell—for ever!

[As they are leading him off, the KING with attendants comes hastily from the distant part of the garden.]

KING.

What savage broil profanes the holy stillness
Of this blest evening, and these blissful bowers,
Held sacred to Granada's queen?—Her train,
Where loiter they?—thus negligent?

[The female train rush in from all parts, terrified.]

ALHAMUT.

My liege,

Your faithful Zegrís, to your service vow'd,
Seeing these haunts of royal privacy
Most foully violated, and your honour
Outraged by the Aben-Zurrah——

KING.

Ha! Hamad!

He, whom e'en now mistaken mercy spared?
But speak—be brief—tell all the hateful tale.

ALHAMUT.

Forgive if loyalty unwilling wound.
Foul passion's language struck our startled ears!
We nearer drew:—Of flight the villain spoke,
And caught her in his arms—the yielding fair!—
My liege, our zeal no longer knew control:
On him we rush'd, and as he fiercely struggled,
From his false bosom fell this treach'rous scroll.

[*The KING snatches, and reads it.*

KING.

Accursed traitor!—Thou! abandon'd woman!
The law thy doom declares!—In flames to-morrow
Thy bosom must yield up its fouler fires!

XARIFA (*clasping his knees*).

Oh, hear me, king!—'tis false.

KING (*putting her away with fury*).

I will not hear!

XARIFA (*clinging to him*).

Dash me to fragments! trample me to dust!
I will not—will not loose thee till thou hear me.

KING.

Away, thou serpent!—wind not round me thus.

(To the attendants).

Prepare the rack! and see the flames be fierce—
They cannot match the fury raging *here*.

XARIFA.

Abdallah! hear me! hear me—thou! my husband!

KING.

That tender name! which to my heart erewhile
Had been so sweet! as sting of scorpion now
Is keen and poisonous.

[After an agony he turns to the Zegrís enraged.]

Ye envious Zegrís!

At peril of your lives, and dearer souls,
Prove your tale true!—or I, by Allah, swear
My vengeance shall devise more bitter pangs,
More various, and more lasting, than even these
Your malice has inflicted!

ALHAMUT.

Is suspicion

All the reward of loyalty and faith?

Then, in this presence, thus our knighthood's pledge

We freely throw! *[Throwing down his gauntlet.]*

—and challenge chivalry

Throughout the world! of Moslem faith or Christian,

To take that gauntlet up!

KING.

The bold defiance

Be through the realm proclaim'd!—To-morrow's sun
Shall vindicate my queen from slander's charge,
Or smile upon the flames that wrap her shame.
The deepest dungeon, and the heaviest chains,
Meantime, be Hamad's portion—Thou, Galefo,
See this be done.— [To the attendant ladies.

And ye, lead hence the queen,
Until our farther pleasure we make known.

[*Exeunt severally.*

ACT V.—SCENE I.

JUAN *alone in his tent.—Night.—Illuminated with lamps—armour lying on the ground.*

Strange that this Moorish maid, and gallant youth,
So haunt my fancy!—Yes, her silver tones
Struck on my ear as though Daraxa spoke;
And when *he* sunk in fight beneath my arm,
I could have snatch'd him to my heart, for then
His upward eyes' dark radiance beam'd on me
As hers was wont! [*He paces the stage thoughtfully.*

'Tis rumour'd in the camp,
Xarifa is the fierce Abdallah's queen—
The youth condemn'd to death.

Enter HAMAD, wrapt in a cloak.

What form is this?

HAMAD.

It is the form of one undone by thee!
And, for the spirit once its happy tenant,
By fell Despair inhabited! [*Throwing off the cloak.*

Behold

The victim of thy goodness and thy valour!

JUAN.

Young Hamad!—yes, 'tis he!—What joy is mine
That still thou liv'st!

HAMAD (*giving him a paper with sullen sadness*).

These from Granada's queen!

JUAN.

Ha! from the queen!—Then is it true, poor youth!
Sever'd from her thou lov'st——

HAMAD.

Speak not of *me*!

I have no being, save what ministers
This one act of obedience to her will.

JUAN (*reads*).

“Granada's slander'd queen in knighthood's name

“On noble Juan calls, that in the lists

“His spear maintain her cause against the Zegrís.

“By all condemn'd!—held guilty by her father!—

“No Moorish knight defends the wrong'd Xarifa.

“Heaven and brave Hamad know her innocence!”

HAMAD (*with sudden transport*).

Oh she is pure as yon chaste orb!—as pure
As bending angels who attend to welcome
Her brighter spirit to their heavenly choir!
Give but a sword, brave Juan, to my grasp!
Nay, the bare sinews of this single arm,
Methinks, in virtue's cause should crush to dust

Base, trembling slander, though in mail of proof!

JUAN (*who has watched him with admiration*).

Ye shall stand cleared before the world! Oh thou!

Who rul'st the battle! thou!—attest my vow

To save the wrong'd Xarifa and brave Hamad!

HAMAD.

Art thou a god?

JUAN.

I am a knight, young Moor,
And so art thou!—The cause of innocence!

Of slander'd chastity!—is knighthood's cause

In every clime alike.—Thou shalt have arms—

(JUAN *considers him*).

But who art thou, that, strangely moved, my heart
Should thus adopt thy fortunes?

HAMAD.

I am one,
From birth a wretch!—and now to death consign'd—
To shame, and to oblivion! Noble Juan,
Waste not a thought on *me*. Xarifa's fame
Rescued from slander's taint! and Hamad dead—

[*Taking a string of gems from his bosom, and with
great emotion.*]

Oh! give her this—'tis all that e'er was mine—

Tell her——

JUAN (*examining them with agitation*).

Thine?—thine?—these gems!—Speak, youth—how
thine?

HAMAD.

A mother, with her dying blessing, bound them
Around my infant neck, nor till this hour——

JUAN (*who has torn a similar one from his own bosom,
compares them with trembling hands*).

Are they not, gem for gem, the same?—say thou!

These eyes are dazzled—— [*Brushes off a tear.*

Haply they deceive me.

HAMAD (*takes them*).

I am amazed!—nor know I which was mine.

JUAN.

'Twas on the day we pledged our mutual faith!

A mutual token each!

[*Seems choked, then breaking forth.*

And would she not

Thy infant lips should lisp thy father's name?

My son! my son! my lost Daraxa's image!

[*Falling on his neck in an agony.*

HAMAD.

Thou!—thou my father!—thou—our benefactor!

Against whose breast this parricidal hand

Erewhile was frantic raised! Oh outraged Nature!

JUAN.

Nay, rather own her strong mysterious power!
'Twas Nature spoke when Juan woo'd thy valour
To turn aside in battle!—Imperious Nature!
That summon'd to thy cheek Don Juan's blood,
Deep-mantling crimson at th' inglorious thought;
Nature that pitying warded off thy point,
Lest it should pierce a father's breast, and blunted
The sword of Juan raised against his son.

HAMAD.

My noble father!—canst thou thus excuse
The impious fury——

JUAN.

I, like thee, was young—
Like thee I loved.—And think'st thou, had I fought
For my Daraxa, with less deadly rage
This arm had dared?—Thy peerless mother was!—
My child! thou hast much of her!—Her brow! her eye!
She ruled my soul as only virtue can!
Not as dark braided locks, and laughing eyes,
In every city claim a soldier's homage.
'Twas a new being!—But I prattle idly
Of what has been—'tis past!—and thou, my son!
If it be true, to death condemn'd—how here?
How from Abdallah's cruelty released?

HAMAD.

A faithful Spanish slave who tends the queen
Besought my jailor in Xarifa's name—
I pledged my word to yield myself to-morrow
To meet my doom; and thus my jailor won.
Wrapt in his cloak I darkling pass'd the guard.
Thy outposts I eluded, practised well
To thread each tangled brake, each deep ravine.
But mark!—methinks already in the east
The fatal dawn!—and ere the sun go down
The fair Xarifa dies!—dishonour'd dies!—
Thou, noble knight! my generous foe! my father!
Haste—let us arm to vindicate my queen!
Then will I to my dungeon—with glad arms
Outstretch'd to meet my chains, and hug them close,
Till welcome death——

JUAN.

Talk'st thou of death, my son?
Glory awaits thee, victory, and bliss!
Oh! I have much to tell, and much to learn!
But now for deeds of arms! “For love and glory!”

[They retire into the tent, and the scene closes.]

SCENE II.

*Royal Apartments.*XARIFA (*alone*).

The hour is near, and Esperanza comes not.
By all deserted!—miserable greatness!
A few days past, had the base Zegri knights
Blacken'd the fame of old Moraizel's daughter,
An hundred swords had from their scabbards leapt,
An hundred spears gleam'd in the rest!—But now
I am a queen!—a wretched queen!—all hearts
Have thrown me off to royal loneliness!
Methinks that else—the cause of the oppress'd
Were knighthood's proper cause!

[*Takes a dagger concealed in her dress, and gazes on it.*

Good Esperanza!

If thou succeed not, this, thy last kind boon,
From public obloquy——My father here!

Enter MORAIZEL.

MORAIZEL.

Thou of the Aben-Zurrah race the stain!
The sun already high!—the lists prepared—

No knight takes up the gauntlet by the Zegriss
In proud defiance thrown:—so foul thy deed!
Thy guilt so plain!—At noon, death's iron hand
For ever seals thy shame!

XARIFA (*with dignified composure*).

Not so, my father!

I still have hope—for I am innocent!
Shall I forget, so oft when on your knee
A happy child!—and Hamad at your feet—
To school our opening minds, from all around
You drew some theme of trust in Heaven's mercy?
If in the terrors of the storm I clung
Closer and closer to thy bosom, smiling,
Thou bad'st me lift my tearful eyes, and welcome,
Within the cloud's dark folds, the gathering flood
Salubrious, to fertilize the earth!
Admire the fires that flash'd from pole to pole,
Winnowing the air, with impure vapours clogg'd,
Noxious to life:—and mark, the tempest pass'd,
How bright! how fresh! how joyous nature all!
Thus train'd by thee, in Heaven's darkest frown,
To find a hidden mercy—I will hope!
For I am innocent!—to the last will hope
To leave a spotless name!—and thou, stern Death,
Suspend thy shaft, till some commission'd spear
Confound the slanderers!—and I own, once more,
No ills, save those thy hand can cure!

MORAIZEL.

My child!

I cannot look on thee and think thee false—
Yet, yet—the scroll!—thy train of damsels
Timely dismiss'd!—all, all, force strong conviction.
Despight of proofs so pregnant, could I hold thee
Still chaste, and pure from blame, my trusty blade
I'd buckle on, and grasp my toughest lance,
Old as I am!—these lusty knights should feel,
(Though to their banners rallied hell's dark powers),
With Heaven on his side, a father's vengeance!

Enter ABDALLAH.

KING.

Ere yet thou die, once more within these walls
Thou see'st thy injured husband, and thy king!
Thank partial nature, lavish to adorn
Thy outward form, that the recoiling hand
Shudders to mar the mould so wond'rous fair,
To strike at the deformity within.—
Would thou wert guiltless!

XARIFA.

If the unshaken purpose
To die in strict observance of the vow,
The fatal vow I breathed, be innocence,
My soul is free of all offence to thee!

KING.

Free of offence!—Ah! shameless!—at thy feet
A slave! a traitor! fired by lawless passion!
Had not the faithful Zegriss interposed——
Ha! dost thou blush?

XARIFA.

It were thy part to blush,
If such thy thoughts of *her* thou hast compell'd
To share thy crown.

KING.

Would'st thou imply the crime
Was *his* alone?—By Allah, might I think it!—
But no—thou lov'st:—with equal guilt thou lov'st.

XARIFA.

I love—his virtues!

KING.

Thou lov'st him with the love
My due!—and purchased by a throne!—Confess
Thou lov'st him—Speak——

XARIFA.

Else why am I thy wife?

KING.

Accursed wretch! thou gloriest in thy guilt?

XARIFA.

I know not guilt. Thy queen is innocent.
I loved young Hamad better than myself

When I, for him, became Abdallah's wife!

But since I am thy wife, know, King Abdallah,

I hold my honour dearer even than Hamad—

And, for my honour's sake, am innocent!

KING.

Then is *he* guilty!—he alone!

XARIFA (*terrified*).

Oh, no!—

Hamad is guiltless!

KING.

Thou, and he!—both, both.

Why tremblest thou?

XARIFA.

Not for myself!

KING.

For *him*

That quivering lip—that crimson tide now rushing

O'er thy blanch'd cheek!—Thou own'st it—all for *him*!

So young! so fair!—Is vice so bold? so reckless?

XARIFA.

No, innocence is bold! and wretchedness

Is, indeed, reckless.

KING.

Would'st thou urge this hand

Instant to search thy bosom's depths, and pluck

Th' adulterous passion forth, and, with it, life!

Hast thou no fear?

XARIFA.

Oh, spare me—spare me, king!
For I *have* fear—I fear to die dishonour'd!
And I have *hope*—hope in Heaven's justice still!
Then stay thy hand. Ere noon, with spotless fame,
The wrong'd Xarifa of thy rage may woo
The stroke, she for a moment would suspend.

KING.

Within an hour, irrevocable death
Will give thy name to infamy for ever.
Already multitudes have throng'd the lists.
The knights appellants, gay-careering, urge
Their foaming coursers o'er the vacant space,
Held by no knight defendant in thy cause.

[*A trumpet heard.*

The trumpet sounds! The ministers of justice
But wait my signal to conduct thee forth
To public execution!

XARIFA (*with great firmness*).

I am prepared!

If Heaven protect not innocence below,
The greater its reward in realms of bliss!
And she thou would'st to infamy consign,
Closing her eyes in death awakes to glory!

[*As she is speaking the Officers of Justice enter, and
she is led to execution.*

SCENE III.

The Lists.

In the farther part of the stage preparations for the execution of the Queen. The Zegri Knights armed cap-à-pie on horseback, with their lances in the rest. After they have paraded the lists, the Queen is led in, covered by a black veil, to slow and solemn music, and conducted to a seat apart from the King, who ascends a throne. ALHAMUT lifts his vizor, and speaks.

ALHAMUT.

Mighty Abdallah ! see your faithful knights,
Who, when the morning dawn'd, already arm'd,
Their trusty lances grasp'd ; and confident
In their good cause, in Allah, and the Prophet,
Thrice by the trumpet's voice have vainly call'd
On knighthood to defend thy faithless queen—
The hour appointed by the law is pass'd !
If none embrace her cause, 'tis Heaven's decree,
Thy queen is guilty !—Wherefore this delay ?

KING.

Valiant Alhamut !—yes, thy words are just.
Allah has blest, my friends, the loyal swords

Your faith unsheathed against her double treason.
(*Rising.*) The queen is guilty! Let devouring flames
Prey on those charms, by angry Heaven lent
To wreck a monarch's peace.

*Moors enter with torches to light the funeral pyre, and as
the Officers of Justice approach XARIFA, ESPERANZA
rushes in, and the Queen falls on her neck. Suddenly
a distant trumpet is heard—ESPERANZA clasps her
hands, and exclaims,*

A challenge sounds!

'Tis on the gale!—Forbear, ye bloody men!
Again!—Again!

XARIFA.

Then Heaven has not forgot me!

ALHAMUT.

My liege, delay not. Justice claims her victim.

ESPERANZA.

Nearer, and nearer still!—They come! they come!

*Enter JUAN and HAMAD on horseback, armed cap-à-pie,
their vizors down. They stop before XARIFA, dismount,
and kneel before her.*

JUAN.

Low at your feet, behold, much injured queen,
Two stranger knights, who to your cause devote

Their arms, their lives!—Accept our service, lady,
And we will fall within this listed space,
Or see thy honour, clear'd from slander's stain,
Beam doubly radiant, as the glorious sun
Smiles in his might upon the cloud dispersed.

XARIFA (*rises, and raises them graciously*).

Brave knights, and friends of the defenceless, rise!
The thanks and blessings of a broken heart
Were as a faded wreath, unmeet to grace
Your noble brows! But deeds of godlike goodness
Yield their own meed to souls of godlike mould!
Heaven is my witness that my cause is just!
And hope, that almost had forsook my breast,
In you reposed, becomes strong certainty.
Angels, to pure intentions ever friendly,
Will hover watchful o'er the kindred spirits
Lodged in those gracious forms!

[*Aside to ESPERANZA, while the knights remount
their horses, and prepare to fight.*

'Tis Juan's self!

But who is he?—the younger knight who spoke not?
Methought he trembled.

ESPERANZA (*half smiling*).

He alike is brave!

XARIFA.

Nay, guess my thought, dear Esperanza, he
Whom I dare not name——

ESPERANZA (*whispers*).

'Tis he—'tis Juan's son!

XARIFA.

His son!—Mysterious Heaven!

ESPERANZA.

We are observed.

[*The knights have now taken their positions.*]

JUAN.

Base, recreant slaves! true knighthood's lasting shame!
Thus in the rest I place my trusty spear
In the pure cause of innocence!

HAMAD.

And I!

I have no breath to waste in empty words,
Which could not speak your infamy.—Come on!
This to thy traitor's heart!

[HAMAD engages ALHAMUT, and JUAN, ALI. *Their spears are broken; they dismount, and fight with their swords. JUAN and HAMAD conquer. ALHAMUT falls on the front of the stage. HAMAD points his sword at his breast.*]

HAMAD.

Villain, ere yet this hand dismiss a spirit
Recoiling hell shall shudder to receive,
Declare Xarifa's angel purity.

ALHAMUT.

The voice of Hamad!—Heaven! thy hand is on me—
Release my bosom—Oh!—the skies are dark—
And Paradise—for ever—closed——

HAMAD.

Speak, traitor!

ALHAMUT.

Oh!—sheathe thy sword—already—Hamad—
Its cold—cold point——

HAMAD.

Ere yawning hell engulf thee,
The queen!—the queen!——

ALHAMUT.

The queen is—innocent!

[ALHAMUT *sinks into his squire's arms, and is borne to the back of the stage. Shouts of triumph. JUAN and HAMAD lay the swords of the conquered Zegrís at XARIFA'S feet.*

JUAN.

Lady, thou art free! a wretched queen no more;
The vow, at an unhallow'd shrine extorted,
Is void!—betroth'd to Hamad—perjury!
And he who casts thee from him, to the flames,
Has justly lost thee.

KING (*rushing from his throne*).

Lost?—Presumptuous knight!

Thy valour claims a monarch's thanks; thou hast them:
But *we* give law within Granada's walls!
And thou, our queen once more, to fame restored,
We take thee to our bosom, and our throne.

[As he approaches to take her hand, she comes forward with disordered steps, avoiding him.]

XARIFA.

Forbear, Abdallah!—Nay, approach me not.

HAMAD (*with exultation and impassioned expression*).

Th' award of knighthood is held Heaven's decree!
Again thou art mine! my wife betrothed! my love!
Thou my lost happiness! my rescued bliss!
My life! my all!—

XARIFA.

Forbear!—forbear! alike.

[She motions all to stand apart with increasing agitation.]

A little space I pray—Oh! farther yet.—

(*To HAMAD tenderly*).

Thou, most of all!—My bursting heart would thank—
Would thank—my brave deliverers!—for fame—
Life's better part—restored—

[She appears unable to proceed—a pause of suspense and violent emotion on her part. Aside.]

But not—for life!

To live the tyrant's wife!—Or worse—to give

To Hamad's love pollution! perjury!
Oh, horrible alike!—Death!—Death! alone.

(To HAMAD with assumed firmness).

Th' award of knighthood cannot loose the vow
Breathed at the altar! breathed in truth and honour,
Howe'er extorted——

(To ABDALLAH with dignity).

King! I am thy wife!

KING.

Pattern of virtue! glory of my throne!

*[As he approaches with rapture she still wards
him off.]*

XARIFA.

A moment yet delay! I pray—a moment——

(To HAMAD).

To thee, my Hamad, all I am was vow'd—
From childhood vow'd! lord of my first fond thoughts!

(Turning to MORAIZEL).

The husband thou, my father, badst me love!
And on my head (thou heard'st it) I invoked
Heaven's vengeance if in thought or deed I wrong'd him.

[She takes a dagger concealed in her breast.]

Thus!—thus!—I seal, and quit alike each vow!

[Stabs herself.]

KING *(rushing to support her).*

Hold, frantic woman!

MORAIZEL.

Spare thy wretched father!

XARIFA (*to ABDALLAH*).

I die—a virtuous queen—and spotless—wife—
Hadst thou—been gentle!—patient—I—had waited—
The sure—yet slower hand—of—sorrow.—

*[She puts him gently from her, and makes an effort
to approach HAMAD, who rouses himself from
stupefaction, and supports her.]*

Hamad!—

A few—pangs—yet!—to me they—are not—bitter,—
And—I am thine—again!—for ever—thine!—

[HAMAD attempts to seize the dagger she has dropped.]

She makes an effort, and catches his arm.

Live! live!—to pay—my debt—of gratitude—
To him—thy—noble—father!—

*[She motions JUAN to approach, takes his hand, and
points to HAMAD.]*

Guard him!—save—him—

From—his—despair—Oh thou—my brave—preserver.

[She sinks again on HAMAD's bosom.]

Kind Death—deals—gently—with me.—'Tis not—hard
To sink—in sleep—thus gazing—on thee—Hamad!—
It had—been—hard—to live—another's—wife!—
And, stain'd—by broken—vows,—I were—unworthy—

[Seeing her father, who hangs over her in speechless sorrow.

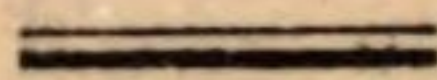
Thy—blessing—on thy dying—child!—My Hamad!—
Oh!—I am—very—faint!—that pang!—it cancels—
The—fatal—vow!—and now—my love!—my husband!

[She dies in HAMAD's arms, and the curtain drops.

POEMS.

FORMS

P O E M S.



STANZAS

WRITTEN IN APRIL, 1797, SOME MONTHS AFTER THE
DEATH OF MY SISTER JANE.

Now laughing Spring awakens all the vale,
On Zephyr's wing a thousand perfumes float,
And the first cuckoo's solitary note
Bids us expect the evening nightingale:
With gaudy flowers the chequer'd fields are drest,
The violet lurks in every brake and dell;
With joy and hope all Nature seems to swell:
But 'tis nor joy, nor hope, that swells within my breast.

For not gay Spring that wont to lift my soul,
Nor zephyrs breathing on the bounding sense
Of untamed youth, in all their redolence,
Can now keen memory's secret power control:

Nor birds, nor flowers, in tangled brake or dell,
That once through all my being bore delight,
Can my dull ear and sadden'd eye invite,
Or teach my heart again with joy and hope to swell.

Fragrant the breezes of the morning sweep,
Bearing away the new-turn'd furrow's breath,
And scent of grass fresh-nibbled on the heath
By eager sheep; while on the crumbling steep
Rash lambs, thick huddling, seem the race to urge:
So rash, so sportive once, a happy child,
My new existence filled with rapture wild,
I too snatched pleasure strange, like them, on danger's
verge.

But morning breezes bear no healing breath
To her, whose first friend is in earth laid low.
Nor grass, nor sheep, can teach the heart to glow,
Whose loved companion is the prey of Death:
Nor life first bursting all around is sweet
To eyes that mark'd life ebb in one so dear;
Nor Nature's universal smile can cheer
Her, who is doomed no more her sister's smile to meet.

SONNET

OCCASIONED BY A DREAM.

OFT when life's cares, and woes, and fears are fled,
Swept by the wing of hovering sleep away,
Fair dreams enchanting float around my head,
(Enchanting dreams, for of my sisters they),
And all the heaven of my early day
Fresh dawns upon me; and around me glows
Each sparkling eye, with youth, and hope, once gay,
Now closed for ever, or now dimm'd by woes:
My weary spirit tastes of joy again
In sweet illusion, when a creeping thrill
Of horror, boding some impending ill,
Half thought—half felt—renews the sense of pain;
Affrighted sleep spreads his swift wings for flight,
Fair dreams and sister forms quick snatching from my
sight.

Feb. 1801.

TO A YOUNG LADY

ON HER APPROACHING MARRIAGE.

OH! never may the hope that lights thine eye,
Sweet maid! be changed to disappointment's gloom!
Never, th' ingenuous frolic laugh I prize
To the forced smile that care must oft assume!
But may the blissful dream of thy young heart—
That dream from which so many wake too late—
Of joys that love requited shall impart,
Be realized in thy approaching fate!
And may I meet that frolic laugh again,
When time shall mix thy raven locks with grey,
Nor on thy brow detect the trace of pain,
Open as now, ingenuous, and gay;
And calling to thy mind my terrors vain,
“My dream is realized,” oh may'st thou say!

Aug. 1801.

BOUTS RIMÉS

GIVEN BY A YOUNG FRIEND AT SUPPER, AND FILLED
ON THE SPOT, ADDRESSED TO HIM.

O! THAT I could my lab'ring thought so dress
That grave rebuke might wear an aspect gay,
So should I wake fair virtue's sleeping ray
In thy young breast, thy riper age to bless.
So shouldst thou crown thy father's visions bright,
And, nobly roused, from Pleasure's shackles free,
Thy genius and thy worth should then agree;
Nor wouldst thou Reason's sober dictates slight.
Then wise and gentle, generous and brave,
Thy brow should thy soul's character assume,
Whose lasting trace should dignify the gloom
Of age one day, nor fade till in the grave.
Awake! awake! disdain each worthless care,
Spurn Pleasure's tinsel chain, and nobly dare!

Sept. 1801.

ON DUNSTONBURGH CASTLE.

WRITTEN UNDER THE FIRST IMPRESSIONS MADE BY THE
NEWS OF PEACE IN OCTOBER 1801.

MAJESTIC Ruins! that so sadly speak

The glory of past days, and seem to grow
To the huge rock, high, desolate, and bleak,

That curbs the ocean tossing far below;
Shatter'd by time and war, sublime ye stand
In awful solitude!—on either side,

How vast the waste of water, or of land!

Above your head th' expanse of Heaven how wide!
Now round your hoary battlements dark frown

The threat'ning skies! while sudden from the west
The setting sun a radiant beam has thrown,

That gilds each fretted stone on your broad breast.
Touch'd by the glorious light, your turrets now

Gleam on the heavy clouds that roll away
With sullen pride,—again your deep-scarr'd brow
Smiles terrible beneath the evening ray.

So o'er thy ruins too, more awful far,
And far more sad, my country! heaven-born Peace
Her radiance flings, that gilds thy every scar,
While backward rolling, Fate's dark tempests cease.
So smiling terrible, through nature's tears,
Fancy might paint thy veterans, with clasp'd hands,
O'er the void tombs that vain affection rears
To sons, to brothers, fallen in hostile lands;
The gallant youths, alas! thy strength, and pride,
England! who in *thy* cause, yet not in *Freedom's* died!

SONNET.

SEE the poor captive from his dungeon break,
Where long he pined, and hail the light of day,
With eyes that in the broad effulgence ache,
With smiles that mid deep lines of anguish play !
How eagerly he meets the morning gale,
With lab'ring lungs that each sweet breath would
seize !
How fondly views the hill, the plain, the vale,
Green meadows, brooks, fields, flow'rs, and waving
trees !
And, " Gods !" he cries, " how dear is Liberty !
Is there in Heaven's large gift a boon beside ?
The world is mine, and all the good I see !"
But soon, too soon, his raptures wild subside,
And sighing sad, " Not Freedom's self to me
Is sweet," he cries, " if one to share it be denied."

IMITATION OF BURNS.

TO THOMAS GRAHAM OF BALGOWAN,
NOW LORD LYNEDOCH.

IN could death lock'd is mute the tongue
That best thy virtues could ha' sung,
On lyre the muse hersel' had strung
To Scottish lays,
Till on the inmost heart had rung
Thy well-earn'd praise.

Yet when the lark his song has closed,
And cozie 'mang the grass is housed,
Wi' head beneath his wing composed,
The houlet shrill
Shrieks, by the dewy night-air roused,
Wi' fearless bill.

So I, by ventrous friendship led,
Though thy own country's bard be dead,

And, weeping, every muse be fled
Wi' Burns away,
Wad weave a garland for thy head
O' Scottish bay!

Wad fain thy dauntless valour sing,
Resistless as the tempest's wing
That wave on wave does dashing fling
Upo' the shore;
Yet mild thy soul as breath of spring
When war is o'er.

But och! in vain I glowre and spell
Thy social merits a' to tell,
And thou maun aiblins blush thyself
Sic strains to hear,
For Virtue loves in shade to dwell
Wi' modest fear.

June 17, 1802.

STANZAS

SUGGESTED BY A CANZONE OF PETRARCH.

“Amor se vuoi ch' i torni al giogo antico.”

P. 2. C. 2.

AWAY, proud boy, away! thou canst not harm;
Seize not thy unstrung bow, nor aim thy dart,
Void is thy quiver, nerveless is thine arm,
Vanish'd thy cruel empire o'er my heart:
No more a mighty God
Art thou, whose sov'reign nod
To worlds can woes and terrors wild impart;
No more I bend and weep before thy throne,
And sigh my soul away, unheeded and alone.

Hence, tyrant urchin, hence! and humbly lay
At the cold foot of Death thy broken bow;
Death's iron hand has borne thy torch away,
Death! mightier Death! proud victor, binds thee low.

A feeble child thou art,
And aim'st a pointless dart.
Arm'd by despair, my bosom dares the blow—
Thy baby archery I laugh to scorn—
Away! and leave me here, my liberty to mourn.

Or if once more thou wouldst me of thy train,
Seek thou my treasure in the earth laid low;
And if it be that thy unbounded reign
O'er Heaven extend, and o'er th' abyss below,
Burst thou the sacred tomb,
That clasp'd in early bloom
The form to which alone my soul can bow!
Wrest thou from Death the prize he bore away,
And in her charms resume thy universal sway.

Hang on that brow the same sad pensive weight,
Then wake that smile that might awake the dead,
Bright as the glittering beam of orient light
Breaks o'er a weeping sky when storms are fled!
And breathe those sounds again,
Thrilling through every vein,
Sounds that to thoughts of Heaven the fancy led,
While the rapt soul hung fondly on each note,
Which on the ear, when past, long sweetly seem'd to
float.

And those luxuriant locks, with art control'd,
In glossy braids around her temples bind,
Now in an envious net of twisted gold
Be all their waving glories close confined;
Now loosed from every band,
With sly and sportive hand
Toss them in ringlets on the wanton wind,
Then bind me, gazing, to thy ear again,
And I will kiss my bonds, and hug once more my chain!

FRAGMENT,

ON THE IMPRESS OF THE SEAMEN OF THE FLEET FROM
INDIA TO MAN THE KING'S SHIPS*.

AUGUST, 1804.

MARK ye the towering vessels, dimly seen,
That throng the horizon? freighted with the wealth
Of either world, as their proud bosoms stem
The opposing surge, tossing their big sails high,
Exulting!—for they bring their treasure home,
And, laden as they are, have quell'd the foe
Who durst impede their course. The lioness
Thus homeward bears the prey, to nature true,
And in a mother's fond endearing love
Terrible, although th' unerring spear
Aim'd by the hunter gore her panting side:
So, bounding o'er the billows, ride our fleets,

* This fleet had been attacked, on its homeward bound passage, by the French squadron commanded by Admiral Linois. The senior officer, Captain Dance, not only resisted the attack of the French admiral, but actually compelled him to fly with his flag and men of war, before the armed merchantmen of England.

To reach the land that owns the sacred name
Of *home* ; and high among the shrouds, brave hearts
Beat towards that home with strong tumultuous joy.
The deep-scarr'd mariner, in thought already
Snatches the dear ones to his arms, long left
In penury, and for whose sake alone
He dared th' Atlantic surge, the tempest's rage,
The thunder of the foe, and dire disease.
Perchance escaped the fatal fever's sweep,
With alter'd looks, languid and sad, some pine
For inland sweets, green fields, umbrageous woods,
And trickling rills refreshing to the soul.
How many eyes that wept not when they saw,
Weltering in blood, their mangled comrades fall,
Now swim in tears at sight of the white cliffs
That gird their native isle ! How many ears
That, unappall'd, have heard the cannons roar,
With quivering nerves now strain the trembling sense
To catch the shout faint-wafted from the strand !
Haply the youth, who utter'd not a groan
When the jagg'd steel erewhile his shatter'd limb
Slow-sever'd, heaves the tender sigh, unmann'd,
To think how joyfully his coming waits
The doting mother—who shall see him *thus* !
But ah ! no more shall he, the deep-scarr'd veteran,
In his fond arms his dear ones clasp ; nor he,

Sad pining after late disease, shall gaze
On inland verdure, nor inhale the airs
Fraught with unnumber'd sweets from flow'rets breathed,
Fresh herbs salubrious, and the steamy earth;
Nor they, who with moist eyes descry these cliffs,
Shall view them nearer, nor with eager step
Print the loved soil; nor shall the trembling sense
Aught seize of an applauding country's shouts,
Save the faint sound by pitying winds convey'd.
For lo! forth rushing from the shore, are sped
The fatal barks, with cruel purpose wing'd,
And sudden torn from yet but fancied joys,
Despotic power condemns them, thus o'ertoil'd,
To labours new, and all the ills of war!
And shall their countrymen her bidding do?
Gods! shall they grasp the unsuspecting hand,
Outstretch'd to greet with honest joy these men
As brothers,—and the mandate fell declare?

TO PSYCHE*,

ON READING HER POEM.

Who hears the lark's wild rapturous carol shrill,
Nor feels with kindred joy his bosom glow?
Who, the lone owl's loud dismal shriek of woe,
Nor starts as with a sense of coming ill?
The mingled bleatings that at evening fill
The dewy air with tender sounds, that flow
From mother's love, all answering hearts avow,
Such sympathy does nature's voice instil!
What wonder, then, if the enchanting lay
In which the soul of love and virtue blend
Their force resistless, and thy heart pourtray,
While all the Nine their fascination lend,
That the rapt fancy the strong spell obey,
Greeting thee, unknown Psyche! as a friend?

April, 1806.

* Mrs. Tighe, authoress of the poem so called, was herself called *Psyche*, by her friends.

PSYCHE'S ANSWER.

LADY, forgive if late the languid lyre,
At length responsive to thy sweetest lay,
Breathe its low trembling chord with weak essay,
To utter all my grateful thoughts inspire;
Forgive, if vacant of poetic fire
I seem with frigid heart and dull delay
The flattering summons careless to obey;
Woo'd, kindly woo'd, so highly to aspire,
And echo the soft name of friend!—for me,
Alas! for me, in anguish and in fear,
The darkling days have since rolled heavily;
But go, my Psyche! in her partial ear
Whisper the sad excuse; and bid her see
In thine, the “sister form” most fair, most dear!

May 7th, 1807.

TRANSLATION*

OF

HORACE'S ODE TO GROSPHUS.

THE mariner on the Egean tost,
Sighs for repose, when from the pilot's sight
The moon is shrouded, and th' uncertain light
Of friendly stars in gathering clouds is lost.
The Thracian, terrible to armed foes,
Asks of the Gods repose;
Repose the weary Median fair would know
Who bends th' unerring bow ;
Repose, my Grosphus, not by gold procured,
By robes of Tyrian dye, nor precious gems ensured.
For not the wealth proud Persia can display,
Th' attendant lictor, and the consul's state,

* The above paraphrase was undertaken at the desire of a friend, who accompanied the request with a literal translation in English prose. Had I understood the original, or been, at the time, aware how peculiarly unfitted to the character of Horace is that more expanded metre which I adopted, I should have employed a shorter measure, and have attempted a more compressed style.

The lofty dome, and all the gifts of fate,
Can the wild tumults of the soul allay,
And still the breast; nor from the fretted roof
Keep fluttering cares aloof:
Blest who, content with little, simply fares,
Whose board no goblet bears,
Save one descended from his frugal sires;
His rest by fears unbroke, or sordid, base desires.

Ah why this breath of life so fleeting prize?
With distant aim why projects idly form?
Why climates seek that other sun-beams warm?
Say, can the wretch who from his country flies,
Fly from himself?—Destructive care e'en now
Mounts the tall vessel's prow!
Behold the warrior on the rapid steed!
Swift care o'ertakes his speed!
Swifter than flies the stag that, startled, springs,
Swifter than Eurys bears the clouds upon his wings.

The man of mind serene, beyond to-day
No thought will take, still on the present fixt;
And if his cup with bitterness be mixt,
The cheerful smile upon his lip will play,
Tempering the draught—for not on earth below
May we each blessing know:

Renown'd Achilles in his manly bloom
Found an untimely tomb :
Tithonus languish'd in eternal years,
And Time may snatch from thee what he for me prepares.

Sicilian cows, and herds unnumber'd, low
Along thy meads ; eager thy coursers neigh,
That in the chariot race thy hand obey ;
Gorgeous with purple dye thy vestures glow.
To me the gentle fates (my promised meed)
An humble farm decreed ;
O'er my rapt thought in happy hour to feel
The Grecian muse soft steal ;
And a calm soul, that with determined choice
Shuns the malignant world, and scorns its idle voice.

Jan. 1805.

SONG.

THOUGH I may never more behold
Thine eye of heaven's blue,
And catch the timid glance that told
Thy heart so fond and true ;
By memory's magic force I feel
That eye still on me beam,
And half its pang from absence steal,
Lull'd by the waking dream.

The smile that on thy lips erewhile
So kindly wont to play,
That could each idle care beguile
Of Love's first golden day ;
Now, when lone fancy rules the hour,
At evening's lingering close,
Comes o'er my soul with mightier power
To soothe my real woes.

SONG,

SET TO MUSIC BY MISS PARKE.

SHALL this pale cheek no pity claim,
That thou wert wont to swear
Might opening damask roses shame?
Ah! if that hue no more it wear,
Thine, cruel! be alone the blame,
Who hung wan lilies there.

And is this eye, with tears o'erfraught,
To thine no longer known?
This eye that read the tender thought,
Erewhile soft trembling in thine own;
By thee, alas! to weep, since, taught,
And all its lustre flown.

Thou, who hast clouded with despair
My joyous break of day,

And blighted what to thee seem'd fair,
Youth's mantling bloom, and smile so gay;
Tear from my heart, in pity tear,
The power to love away!

H. C. P. July, 1806.

SONG.

NANNIE ATTIE.

FROM NATURE.

SET TO THE TUNE OF "THE FLOWERS OF THE FOREST."

AND do I see the bairn again
That first I rock'd upo' my knee?
The bairn whose earliest moan I hush'd,
The bairn whose first smile dwelt on me?
Ah! turn aside the lock sae brown
That hides fra' me thy bonnie brow;
For dim with age these eyes are grown,
And tears of gladness blind them now.

Fu' twenty years ha' stolen by
Since Nannie Attie saw thy face;
And these auld eyes or see amiss,
Or still see ilk remember'd grace.
Then turn aside, &c.

The same thy ivory temples clear,
Sae kind the things thy young eye said ;
'Twas here I traced the vein sae blue,
'Twas here the thought sae pure I read.
Then turn aside, &c.

Southill, Jan. 1808.

SONG.

THE paleness stealing o'er thy cheek
To me betray'd thy pitying thought,
And ill thy faltering tongue could speak
The cruel lesson pride had taught:
Oh give me back the lingering smile,
That bade me hope, though you denied!
Oh let me live in doubt awhile,
And follow, blind, my blindfold guide!

SONG.

THE tell-tale Sun is in the sea,
Now fades the last pale, lingering, light,
And thou hast sworn to fly with me
Beneath the friendly veil of night.

What though the loud wind rock the grove,
And rudely toss thy raven hair?
Wild Nature's haunts are those of Love,
And peace and liberty are there.

Why shudd'ring press thee to my side?
Why start, my love, with doubt and fear?
'Twas but the bird of night that cried!
Hark! 'tis the torrent tumbling near!

If love like mine thy heart has known,
To other cares and joys 'tis seal'd;
Love mocks all sorrows but his own,
And damps each joy he does not yield!

H. C. P. Feb. 1808.

LINES

COMPOSED FOR A PARTICULAR PIECE OF MUSIC.

EVER still must I adore thee,
Though wide seas between us roll,
Each fond thought shall hover o'er thee,
And thy image fill my soul :
Morning breaking on the ocean,
Will thy opening graces wear ;
And with evening's last devotion
I will breathe thy name in prayer.

Tossing sad mid waters boundless,
While for thee I live,
Ah ! wilt thou, dear one, give
A sigh—a tear—to me ?
Is the doubt tormenting groundless ?
Yes, I read thine eye ;
Faithful I again shall clasp thee
Ere I die :

Ever still must I adore thee,
Though wide seas between us roll,
Each fond thought shall hover o'er thee,
And thy image fill my soul.
Morning breaking on the ocean,
Will thy opening graces wear ;
And with evening's last devotion
I will breathe thy name in prayer.

July, 1809.

SONNET

ON SEEING THE BUST OF THE LATE SAWREY GILPIN.

My friend! my father! here thy heavenly mien,
Here the last smile thy parting spirit hung
On thy cold lips, as passing forth serene
It sought the fount of love from whence it sprung,
Sorrowing I trace, and think how I have seen
Thy meek eye beam sublime, while rapt thy tongue
Told of Heaven's mercy, as each note had been
To win the wanderer home, divinely strung!
The loved, the honour'd, kind, parental air,
Impress'd upon the cold and senseless stone,
My streaming eye, and bursting heart declare,
As when in youth's wild joyous day, long flown,
With smiles benignant, such as fathers wear,
"My child," thou saidst, as I had been thine own.

May, 1807.

WILLIAM AND SARAH:

A BALLAD.

FROM NATURE.

MARK yon low roof beside the road !
Old William, blind and poor, lived there,
And Sarah, bow'd beneath the load
Of age, and sickness, want, and care.

When suffering most she breathed no groan,
But spoke with cheerful utterance still,
Thankful for blessings she had known,
For William's sake she welcomed ill.

And still it was her nightly prayer
To live to close his sightless eyes ;
For this her torturing pains to bear,
Then sink in death ere morning rise.

“ For who, when Sarah is laid low,
Will be,” she said, “ poor William’s friend ?
Who spread his board, who smooth his brow ?
Who on his wayward age attend ?

“ Ah ! who th’ uncertain staff will guide
With which he feels, amiss, his way ?
And careful lay the stone aside
That might his tottering footstep stay ?

“ Who lead him to the shelter’d stile
That fronts the sun at noontide hour ?
And watch the western clouds the while
To warn him of the gathering shower ?

“ When thunders roll above our head,
And the storm rocks our humble wall ;
Then helpless blindness shrinks with dread,
Though nought the conscience pure appal !

“ Who then, his listening ear to cheat,
Shall name our children far away,
And wake each recollection sweet,
Till they in thought around him play ?

“ A smile faint-stealing o’er his cheek,
His eye-balls then in vacant space
Will seem each cherub face to seek,—
On memory stamp’d a cherub face,—

“ For thirty years have o’er them roll’d,
Since my good man our girls could see ;
Our sons have thirty harvests told
Since rosy boys around his knee ;

“ And want, and time, have, on each brow,
For smiles deep lines of care portray’d,
And cherub faces round *them* now
So bloom,—and so are doom’d to fade !

“ Ah ! none but Sarah can retrace
Each snatch of joy he e’er has known !—
E’en on the fallow’s barren space,
A wild flower here and there has blown !

“ Then be it still my nightly prayer,
To live to close his sightless eyes,
For this my torturing pains to bear,
Then sink in death ere morning rise !”

With steadfast hope, and faith serene,
The humble prayer of duteous love,
Pour'd ardent forth, in anguish keen,
Was heard, where mercy rules above!

Old William, drooping, softly dosed,
And without pain resign'd his breath;
His sightless eyes poor Sarah closed,
And, grateful, sunk ere morn in death.

Worthy, Oct. 1809.

FABLE.

TO MY CHILD,

IN ANSWER TO HER "VISION OF MIRZA."

NAY, little dreamer, hear me too !
May I not dream as well as you ?
I've visions also, I can tell ye.

Methought, that journeying towards Delhi,
High mounted on a camel's back,
(A hump-back'd, ewe-neck'd, eastern hack),
Exhausted, weary, thirsty, hot,
I 'lighted on a verdant spot,
Where as I sat to rest and muse,
Flowers spread their bosoms of all hues ;
And lo ! these various flowers among
Gay butterflies in be vies throng !

One little troop I chiefly note,
That in the soft airs idly float,
With gorgeous wings of velvet plume,
Wrought, one would swear, in Iris' loom,

And by her pencil taught to glow
With tints prepared to deck her bow.

But now observe the strangest thing!
These butterflies of glorious wing
Seem'd still to float, with one consent,
From flow'r to flow'r, wherever went
A little yellow butterfly,
Of small regard to catch the eye;
Of such are seen the homely race
That England's lukewarm dog-days grace.

Now this fond, fickle, fluttering fly
Leads to a rose-bud blooming nigh,
And when to taste its sweets they think,
It beckons to the chequer'd pink;
Now round the woodbine shapes its flight,
But cannot fix on which t' alight:
Then flitting sideways towards the lily,
It spies the vulgar daffodilly,
Or wheeling with a pironette,
Sudden descries the violet;
Yet scarcely has the perfume caught
Ere orange flowers claim a thought,
Or gaudy tulips strike its fancy,
Or, "freakt with jet," th' *immortal* pansy.

And now methought the evening hour
Stole on the scene, and every flower

Profuse, a double perfume flung,
While dews upon the still air hung.
The blue-bells see the planet sink,
And hang their heads, while daisies wink,
And lapt convolvuluses sleep
Till on their lids again he peep.

'Twas now the little yellow thing
Began to droop the cheerless wing,
And labour in its giddy flight,
Clogg'd by the chilly damps of night.

The butterflies in insect tongue,
Now one and all, or said, or sung,
"Look, sisters! whither flies the Sun?
"Ah! whither, ere our race be run?
"Just now he gave us life and light,
"Nor thought we of *such things* as Night,
"And we have no provision made!
"The dew will spoil my rich brocade."
Cries one, "My golden spots look dim,
"That in the sun's beam rival'd him!"
Another, "See, my crimson hue
"And purple tints are turning blue!"

The thoughtless troop thus put to rout,
Marked an old bee that buzz'd about,
A plodding, bustling, busy soul,
Who still, *en passant*, something stole,

Poking within their cups her nose,
Ere sleepy flowers their leaves could close.

Her bundling figure they deride,
With thighs like pockets on each side ;
The sober bee their quizzing hears,
And thus she buzzes in their ears :

“ To sport beneath a summer sun,
“ And still from sweet to sweet to run,
“ To aim at all, on none to dwell,
“ Is not to taste e'en pleasure well :
“ Learn from old mother Bee this truth :
“ Some toil may sweeten even youth.”

Haply this hum-drum, drowsy speech,
Like others fared that wisdom preach ;
But such a buzzing round my head
Awoke me—in my own tent bed.

H. C. P. Feb. 15th, 1808.

IMITATION OF BURNS.

FRAGMENT, IN REPLY TO A LETTER OF AN ARDENT
ADMIRER OF BURNS, WHICH CONTAINED EXPRESSIONS
TOO COMPLIMENTARY TO MYSELF.

AH! find some city hizzie bra',
Nor seek auld Wolsey's mouldering wa',
To throw sic courtly parle awa',
 Auld crones amang,
As wad turn tapsaltary a'
 Brains mickle strang.

For mine by time a' silver'd o'er,
Is fenced fra' flattery's treach'rous lore,
Yet flattery fain wad ope the door
 O' ilka lug,
An' pu' down prudence, wa' and tower,
 Crash at ane tug.

Och, Flattery! saft, an' smooth, an' deft,
Thou's mony a shift deceitfu' left!

For when auld Time, the carle, has reft
 The sonsie face,
Thou'll say he gies to pay the theft
 A nobler grace!

Where virtue's *cannie* air is found!
Experience! learning's charm *profound*!
Of counsel sage the *witching* sound!
 And fifty more
Sic grizly ghaists fra' underground,
 To deck twa' score.

But, hinnie, an' ye'd ken the truth,
Place in this scale ane ivory tooth,
Ane dimpled smile, ane ringlet smooth,
 And a' thegither,
Shall ilka crone exclaim forsooth,—
 “ A feint for t' ither!”

Hampton Court Palace,

July, 1807.

TO MR. YOUNG,

ON HIS READING TAM O' SHANTER WITH PECULIAR SPIRIT.

THE same rude winds wi' mighty sweep
Upheave the waters of the deep,
To dash them on ilk jutting steep
 Their fury meets,
And cozie 'mang low flowrets creep,
 Stealing their sweets.

And suns that rear the forest's pride,
To bear upo' the subject tide
Britannia's thunders far and wide,
 Wi' milder ray
Will glint adown the copse-wood side
 On ilka spray.

So thou wi' learn'd and tunefu' tongue
Wilt pour, mellifluous, full, and strong,
Great Shakspeare's bold, creative song
 Wi' master skill,
Resistless to the listening throng
 Thou sway'st at will:

And Tam o' Shanter, roaring fou,
By thee embodied to our view,
The rustic bard wad own sae true
He scant could tell,
Wha 'twas the living picture drew,
Thou, or himsel!

ALICE AND MARIAN:

A BALLAD.

THE dewy hour was wearing late,
And from the upland field
The cows were lowing at the gate,
Their evening store to yield.

Sad Alice heeded not the sound,
Nor mark'd her feather'd care,
That throng'd, and peck'd, her foot around,
The wonted grain to share ;

And when, at length, the streamlets flow
Beneath her listless hand,
Wayward, she chides the patient cow,
Though motionless she stand :

And from her hazle eye down roll
Big tears upon her cheek,
While sighs, wrung from her inmost soul,
Its bitter anguish speak.

“ ‘Mong April buds his vows were made,
And ere those buds could blow,
His vows,” she cried, “were all betray’d,
And they are Marian’s now.

“ I must forget that ere I heard
That voice so false, so dear!
Alas! how could I doubt *his* word,
While *mine* was so sincere?

“ I must not think how heavenly sweet
That smile would on me beam!
Too well I know it was a cheat,
And all I felt—a dream!

“ It is with merry Marian now
He laughs from morn till noon;
But thy tears, cruel! thine may flow
Ere wane the harvest moon!

“ Though Marian’s frolic mirth so gay
The sultry hay-field cheer,
Say, when the short, cold, sunless day
Shall close the parting year,

“ Will her gay smile then beam as bright,
And beam for only thee?
Will winter’s toils to her seem light
As they had seem’d to me?

“ Say, will she trim thy evening hearth?
Duteous thy meal prepare?
Nor know—nor dream—a bliss on earth,
Save but to see thee there?

“ I too with laughter will beguile
My bosom’s secret smart—
And I could laugh—but that his smile
Still hangs about my heart.

“ These silly tears! they shall not tell
Gay Marian all my woe;”
But as she speaks they bigger swell,
And down her pale cheek flow.

“ I will avoid,” she cries, “ the shade
Where first he told his pain,
The stile where his false vows were made
I ne’er will see again.

“ And when I drive my cows afield
I will go round a mile ;
For as I once, so Marian now
Fond loiters by that stile.”

Yet heedless of the new-made vow
Of love's relenting wrath,
Behind her cows, sad pacing slow,
She winds the wonted path.

She shudder'd as the beach-tree flung
O'er her its lengthen'd shade ;
Shudder'd, for there, fond loitering, hung
Marian, the laughing maid !

The false one, too, hard by she watch'd,
Among the copse-wood glide ;
A trembling hope poor Alice snatch'd—
“ He is not by her side !”

Thus Love the faithful bosom wings
With every jealous care !
Thus Hope to some vain shadow clings
Ere all be blank despair !

Alice, her bosom's peace thus lost,
The long sad summer pined,
And now the yellow leaves are tost
By every gust of wind.

The hoar frost glitters in the morn,
The evening closes chill;
The fields are bare where waved the corn,
And clouds hang o'er the hill.

For gayer scenes the laughing maid
Forsook the sadden'd plain,
And he, the faithless one, repaid
Poor Alice pain for pain.

TO UGO FOSCOLO,

WITH A SNUFF-BOX.

UGO, not mine to scan the high control,
That wrings for Ortis' woes the honest tear,
And bids us tremble with Ricciarda's fear,
But to the poet's mastery yield my soul!
The patriot course that shall thy name enroll
'Mong those who most have held their country dear—
More dear her glory! and in exile drear
Have borne their honour'd sorrows—Fame's proud
scroll
Shall give to after-times!—My task to tell
Of spells that win thee back to lowly earth,
Though in ideal worlds thy genius dwell;
The beaming eye where wit and softness blend!
The homelier radiance of the social hearth,
Haply, e'en now, this bauble from a Friend!

Nov. 1820.

THE END.

TO LEO FORCOSO

WITH A POST-SCRIPT

I am not sure to wear the high crown,
I am wings for a time, wings the human crown,
And this is emblem with humanity's fate,
But to the poet's mystery yield my state,
The poet's crown that shall the crown enroll,
Though those who would have their crown enroll
Have their crown for joy, and to their crown
Have their crown for joy, and to their crown

and

Still free to after-thought, my task to tell
Of such that win the back to holy earth,
Though in ideal worlds my genius dwell,
The burning eye where wit and reason dwell,
The summer radiance of the social heart,
Happily, you now, the people from a friend!

1890

THE END

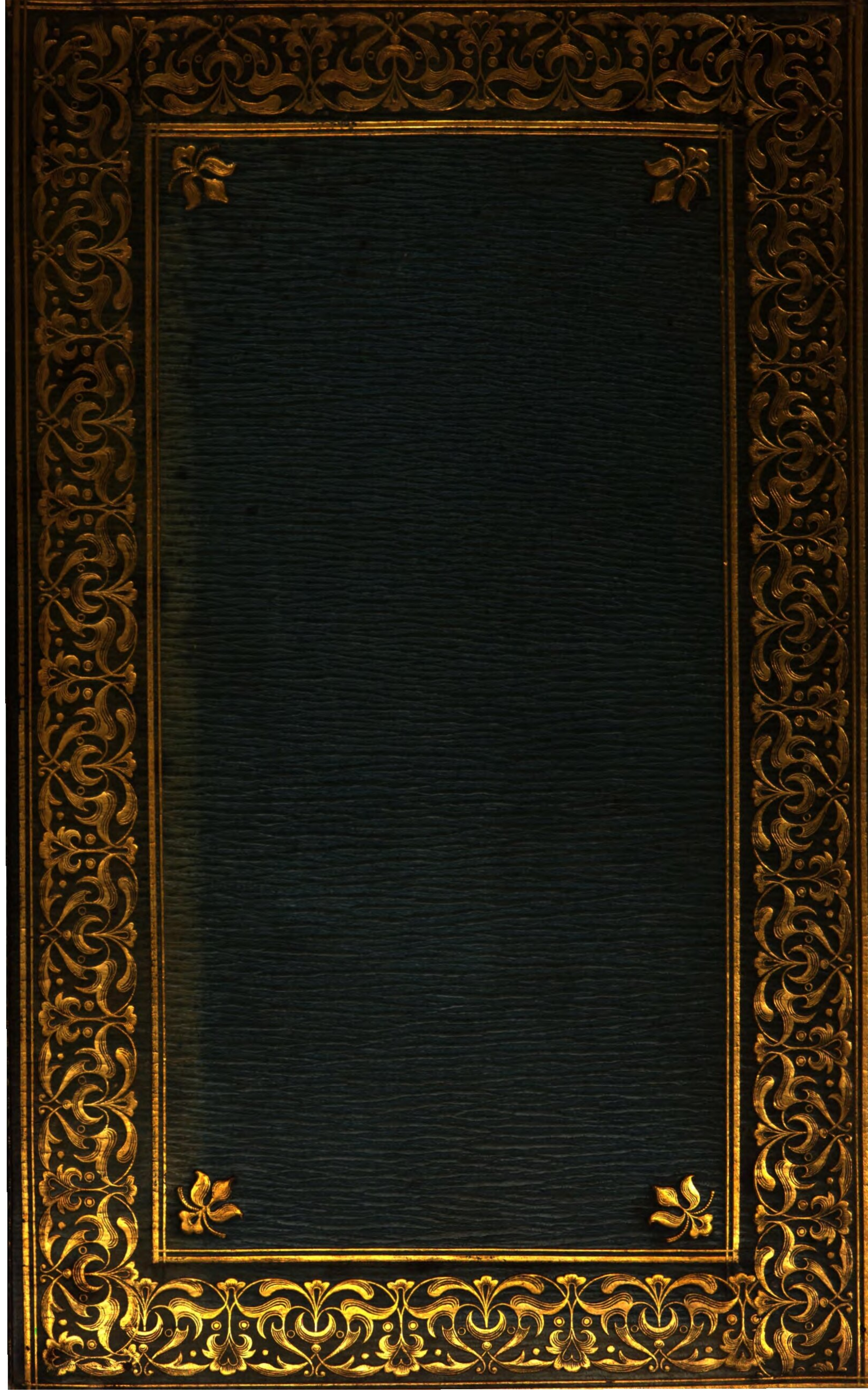
ERRATA.

VOL. I.

- Page viii, line 11, for du, read de.*
12, line 4, for you, read your.
17, line 5, insert a comma after good.
152, line 13, for slumber, read slumbers.
188, line 14, for tone, read tones.
217, line 13, for none, read nor.
232, line 1, for de, read di.
ib. line 13, for vera, read vena.
236, line 7, for rotta de, read rotto da.
ib. line 12, for talbor, read talhor.
248, line 14, for di' riveder, read di riveder.

VOL. II.

- 30, line 11, for Exit Oswald, read Exit Oswald, &c.*
ib. line 14, for Enter Alwyn, read Re-enter Oswald.
76, line 3, for sometimes, read sometime.
79, line 11, "King" should be placed at the end of the line.
231, last line, for binds, read bends.
233, line 8, for ear, read car.
234, line 9, for endearing, read enduring.
256, line 14, for in, read on.
257, line 19, for pironette, read pirouette.
267, line 9, for beach-tree, read beech-tree.
ib. line 17, for wings, read wrings.



Dacre, Barbarina,

Dramas, translations and occasional poems

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